

**WHEAT and SOLDIERS**

**CORPORAL ASHIHEI HINO**

*Translated by*

**BARONESS SHIDZUÉ ISHIMOTO**

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WHEAT AND SOLDIERS



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AND SOLDIERS

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By CORPORAL ASHIHEI HINO

TRANSLATED BY  
BARONESS SHIDZUÉ ISHIMOTO

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*Wheat and Soldiers: An Impression*

by William Henry Chamberlin

*Wheat and Soldiers* is, to the best of my knowledge, the first deeply significant book to come out of the Sino-Japanese conflict. The author, Corporal Ashihei Hino, is a soldier in the ranks of the Japanese army; but the first quality that lifts his work far above the general run of "war books" is the complete absence of any propagandist element. Hino is neither prowar nor antiwar, neither pro-Japanese nor anti-Japanese. What he endeavors to do very successfully is to give the human side of the Japanese drive for Suchow-fu, in which he participated, to show himself and his fellow-soldiers not as legendary heroes but as credible men, their moments of despair and weakness blending with acts of great courage and devotion.

*Wheat and Soldiers* possesses some of the timeless, epic character that made Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by general agreement, the outstanding book on the World War. And it has already achieved in Japan the phenomenal success of *All Quiet on the Western Front* in Germany and other countries. Nearly a half million copies have

been sold, although only a few months have passed since the book was published. The reason for this extraordinary popularity is obvious. Hino is telling what war really is, with all the elements of pain and terror that are systematically omitted from censored newspaper correspondence and official military publications. The Japanese people who have brothers, husbands, sons, friends at the front appreciate this fact and have responded to the appeal of the book in enormous numbers. Before the war Mr. Hino was a well-known writer in Japan and the winner of a literary prize.

#### TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

Less than a year after the outbreak of fighting between China and Japan, the Japanese public was startled by the appearance of a small book entitled *Wheat and Soldiers*. The cover identified the author as "Corporal Ashihei Hino." He was an infantryman, attached to a Japanese unit fighting in Central China.

*Wheat and Soldiers* generated one of those storms of enthusiasm, common to all nations. It was the common soldier, the ordinary "mud slogger," and his view. And it had, besides, another unique quality. It was written, not in any cloistered study, from the perspective of afterthought, but set down from day to day, while the author was actually on the field of battle. He literally turned from seeing a scene to the description of it. Parts of *Wheat and Soldiers* are from his diary. Other sections were taken from his letters to his family.

The book became an overnight sensation in Japan and then "Corporal Hino" was identified. His true name was Katsunori Tamai, born as a son of the president of a stevedore guild in Kyushu. He was already well-known to a small and perhaps

exclusive section of the Japanese reading public. They remembered him as a contributor to literary magazines and the author of a collection of fantasies called *The Warship on the Mountain*. The volume had hardly appeared before he was called to the front.

By an odd coincidence, it was while he was in the midst of his first campaign in China that word came to him that Japanese critics had bestowed upon him the Akutagawa Prize—Japan's highest literary honor—for two of his earlier stories, “The Poor People,” (Funnyo-dan) and “The Fish With Poison,” (Fugu). At that very moment, he was writing the collection of letters and essays that were to be compiled in book form under the titles *Earth and Soldiers* and *Wheat and Soldiers*.

Chronologically, *Earth and Soldiers* came first. But *Wheat and Soldiers*, written some months later, was the first to be published. The former book describes his departure from Japan, the landing at Hangchow Bay, and the drive on Kiashan. Afterward, he was assigned to an intelligence unit in Shanghai and then sent on to Suchow, in Central China.

The Hangchow campaign came in the early months of the fighting and, from a strategic standpoint, was one of the most important moves the

Japanese army made. For six weeks a terrible battle had been raging near Shanghai. More than a million men were involved. Japanese troops had been battering against a steel and concrete line of defenses, constructed long before by the foreign military advisers to the Chinese Government. To all intents and purposes, the struggle had fallen into a deadlock not unlike the one that developed in France during the World War. Then, without warning, the Japanese suddenly landed at Hangchow Bay, behind the Chinese lines. Their appearance at that spot was a major contributing factor in the almost incredibly quick collapse of China's hitherto immovable lines around Shanghai.

"Corporal Hino" was one of those who landed at Hangchow. These units moved, as rapidly as mud and bullets would permit, overland toward the main Chinese rear at Shanghai. He describes the terrible and often heartbreaking marches.

The present volume is a complete translation of *Earth and Soldiers*, detailing his experiences up to the entry into Kiashan, plus a condensed version of *Wheat and Soldiers*. The latter part deals with his misadventure near Suchow.

I do not consider myself adequate to the task of translating a work of literature. However, my devotion to my country and my deep appreciation of the

interest of my American friends led me to attempt this task. Nor do I believe that the time has yet come for us Japanese intellectuals to discuss China. I can only say that Japanese wept openly when they read *Wheat and Soldiers* and the subsequent books by the same author. He voiced the cry of the common soldier, and it was from our own homes that these soldiers were sent. Human hearts responded to a human cry.

With this thought in mind, and with a prayer for the new civilization that is coming to the Orient, I send this translation to my friends in America.

Baroness Shidzué Ishimoto

Tokyo, Japan  
February, 1939.

EARTH AND SOLDIERS



October 20, 1937

*On Board the (Censored) Maru.*

My dear Brother:

I am gazing idly at the immense, deep blue of the sky above me and the water beneath. The colors are the same as they were yesterday and the day before yesterday, and two days before that. The autumn air is clear and fine. But we are growing tired of the sameness, the same view, the same ship, the same blue sky and sea. Here it is, eleven days since we bid good-by to all our people at the pier. I remember well the indescribable emotion that gripped me as we moved out from the harbor and how I tried to hide it beneath a smile. And now, in the weariness of this monotonous life, the picture comes to me again, the print of dear faces floating in a sea of flags.

When this fleet of transports, loaded with soldiers, ran down Shimonoseki Channel and entered the Six Rows Islands, we could see the twinkling lights of houses on both shores. It wrought a strange sensation, compounded of sadness and nostalgia and wondering about the future, a feeling that

everyone has read about in fiction, but few have ever experienced.

Men crowded together on the upper deck and they watched—many with eyes swimming in tears—the homeland receding smoothly, almost imperceptibly in the distance. We stood there a long time, waving our flags until our hands were almost paralyzed. It was not for the people whom we could no longer see, nor by whom we could be seen, but perhaps to the fading mountains and rivers of home. Nobody moved for a long time. Not a single man went below. We just stood there, powerless to move under the weight of feeling that welled up from the bottom of our hearts. You are acquainted with the sentiments expressed in the song, “War Friend”, aren’t you? It was something like that.

Well, we are on our way, across this autumn sea, to an enemy country. But what is the matter? After eleven days, we are still in Japanese waters, watching our homeland, day after day, from the upper deck. From here, I can see some islands, surrounded by the deep-blue water, crowned with brown, rolling hills. There are the dark-green pine forests and the winding coast lines that look like white silk sashes. The gently breaking waves are within our reach. This is no enemy shore, but our own. We are all anxious for a first glimpse of the Chinese mainland.

So, regardless of our impatience, we have not yet lost sight of Japan. Several days ago, we were moving slowly down the picturesque coast, through the Sea of Genkai. Finally, we anchored off an unknown port, unmistakably Japanese. It seemed to me like a bad joke. You picture us as brave men, fighting our way through a hail of bullets at the front. But here we are, still aboard ship, idling away the days in dullness, rotting.

On the (censored) *Maru*, there are about (censored) men and two hundred horses. It is like a floating barracks. We spend the time leisurely, comparing the length of our beards, washing clothes, drinking wine, writing letters, singing (or rather, roaring) folk songs, arm wrestling, playing chess or cards, chattering endlessly, doing nothing, yawning.

The channel is choked with other transports, floating barracks, like ours, and cargo boats. We can see the men plainly. Like ourselves, they are doing nothing. In the distance, a gray, menacing line of battleships is convoying this transport fleet.

Our sleeping quarters are very narrow and the ceiling is extremely low. Obviously, they were built hurriedly, with cheap materials in the middle deck. It has been divided to make two tiers of bunks on either side. The whole space is barely enough to let a man stand erect, so you can imagine the

amount of room in the bunks. It takes a lot of maneuvering to get in and out. When I first saw these bunks and was told that we were to occupy them, I could hardly believe it. It seemed impossible for all these men to crowd together into such a dark, narrow place. At first, I kept forgetting how cramped it was and continually knocked my head against the ceiling. Now we are all used to it. Anything is possible, I realized.

We laid our bags in a row, making a border line between each division of men. When all the men were in here, row upon row of sleeping soldiers, I thought of a can of sardines. No sooner had we become accustomed to being so crowded than another discomfort appeared. We began to suffer from the stuffy, fetid air. I felt my body growing damp with sweat and, before long, I was fairly swimming in my bunk.

However, we joked about it, or bore it in silence, thinking it need only be endured for a few days. But the time stretches out interminably. How many more days in this dark, evil-smelling cavern? We don't know. What is more—we don't even know where we are going!

Naturally, we have all been wondering about our destination. Some say that we are going to Dairen, to reinforce the army of occupation in Manchukuo.

Others are completely convinced that we are on the way to Shanghai. But then one group says that there are already enough men on the Shanghai front and that we will soon find ourselves on the border of Siberia. Still others claim to know that we are going to attack Canton, in South China. So it goes. It is all just guesswork.

Of course, the reason for all this speculation is obvious. We are not on a pleasure trip. Where we land may be a matter of life or death to most of us, perhaps all. This anxiety is a strong undercurrent, running beneath our careless chatter. There is no use reminding each other that we have given our lives to our country and that whether we live or die when we land is of no consequence, now. No one can throw away his life so easily. We are not almighty. None of us is a giant. There is no such thing as training a man to think, without fear, about the last moment of his life. Every day, the same subject creeps into our talk and we know, as never before, that the answer is closed to us in a box of mystery.

Some of the fellows talk with great confidence about the things they believe. But the viewpoint of one man does not satisfy the doubt of another. It serves only to increase anxiety. The question is always left dangling in the air.

As you know, we were all conscripted in September. Then we were immediately organized into a unit. What surprised me, from the first, was the fact that none of us is young. We are all middle-aged, a fatherly-looking group. Most of us are husbands and fathers, some have several children.

Nor is our commanding officer a young man. He is past fifty, with graying hair. The story is that he was a hero in the war with Russia, at the time of the Siberian expedition.

In youth, death seems forever faraway, the smallest cloud on the horizon. Even a soldier, when he is very young, is never really aware of the imminence of death. It may come to the others, but not to him. But in middle age, as most of us are, it is a different thing. So we wonder about our destination.

We are living now under strict army law. In order not to breach a military secret, we are forbidden to communicate with anyone outside the ship. Nobody knows about us. We are not allowed to mail letters. So most of us are setting down our thoughts in diaries. Others are writing long letters to their people at home, without any idea when they may be able to mail them, or whether they will ever be delivered. So it is with this letter of mine to you. I am writing it in the vague hope that we may be permitted to mail tomorrow. But to-

morrow may find us landing somewhere in the face of the enemy, to be instantly shot down. Thus, writing these letters and placing our thoughts in diaries is like writing a will.

Nevertheless, I am going to continue my letters to you as long as possible. It is impossible, as we approach war for the first time, to focus any thought on what it will be like. Time and again, I have tried to picture it mentally, bringing all my knowledge and information to the aid of my imagination. But it never appears clearly in my mind.

Something seems to be happening, below decks. I hear shouting and applause. It is probably one of the usual amateur entertainments. The men, for the most part, have been serene and jolly, but they like these impromptu shows. Some of them are good actors. I should say some are more than amateurs.

Naniwabushi<sup>1</sup> is very popular among us. Almost everybody has tried one or two passages. Again I hear them applauding, clapping their hands and shouting. Perhaps someone has begun the favorite, "The Bloody Handkerchief of Kioi Hill", the equivalent, in old Naniwabushi, of a detective story.

Sublieutenant Yamazaki, our section commander and a champion fencer, is one of the most popular Naniwabushi entertainers. His favorite is the story

<sup>1</sup> Some well-known story, half recited, half sung—Translator.

of "Konya, the Harlot." One evening, when he had been drinking and was in particularly good humor, he performed it. He roared, ". . . and the harlot Konya said to her customer, 'I love you.'" He intoned the words slowly and solemnly, word by word, in and out of tune, creating such a hilarious effect that we went into paroxysms of laughter. Even the sober Captain Shimizu, sitting to one side of the platform and pouring his wine from his canteen, smiled gently as he listened.

One of the things that happens in this amiable atmosphere is that the gulf between an officer and a soldier, which would be strongly in evidence in the barracks, almost entirely vanishes here. When an officer performs well, all the men cheer and applaud. But if he is not so good, the men never hesitate to laugh and jeer in an entirely natural manner. High and low now tend to meet on a common plane, because we are united under one divine authority.

I often think, seriously, about the military system. I have been made commander of the 2nd Squad. There are thirteen men under me. What does this mean? Yesterday, these people had nothing to do with me. We were all strangers. The only common relationship between us was our Japanese citizenship. Then we were mobilized. These people

became members of the 2nd Squad, which was a unit in one of the army sections. They were merely members, whereas I am the chief.

Mere chance determined the formation of a squad. The division leaders arbitrarily put fourteen names into one squad, fourteen more into another, and so on. The names were published and the list was distributed to us. Then we lined up, responding to roll call, and there we were—united under an absolute tie. A new relationship emerged at this moment.

This is, to me, extraordinary. It is difficult to grasp. Thirteen men, thirteen separate individuals, each having his decent living, his profession in his home town, are called to the army. They become soldiers, organized into a 2nd Squad, placed under my command; I, who am nothing more than a simple man with the rank of infantry corporal.

Now, I am the leader of these men. I command them. Some are of much finer personality than I. But no matter; henceforth, they all must obey my order. They are at my disposal. Even more than that; if I give the command, they will hurl themselves into death, itself. Merely because I tell them to do so. What a completely incredible thought it is!

Think of us in normal living. Very few of us,

perhaps none, is the master even of himself. How strange, then, to realize that one has become the master of thirteen others, with absolute control over their lives, with the power to send them to death? When I was informed that I had become the chief of thirteen men, with the authority to throw them into fire or water, I trembled under the thought. It was like a great weight pressing at the back of my brain. I tell you, my dear brother, that in that moment, a totally new and bewildering picture of life came crashing into my consciousness. It is a side of life of which I have never dreamed. And I am utterly unprepared for it.

We squad commanders are under the authority of the section commanders, the section commanders are related in the same way to the company leaders, the company leaders to the battalion chiefs —thus it pyramids, higher and higher. This idea of the human relationship in a great army organization is so unique that it overpowers all my thoughts. All I can do is to grip tightly the reality of it.

At the same time, I am struck with the simplicity of the whole thing. While I am surprised and pondering it so seriously, it is so simple that everyone else has taken it for granted.

(The list of thirteen names was appended.)

These are the names of my men. Everyone of them is very vigorous in appearance. They are good fellows. And here is another strange thing: I am beginning to be excited at the thought of going into battle with my men.

The bell rings, announcing the evening meal.  
6 We can hear it ringing on each of the transports;  
11 the sound comes across the water. We have meal  
0 tickets, which we give to a collector at each meal.  
4 Large crews in the galley prepare the food and also  
8 give us hot tea. The task of cooking for this great  
8 group of men must be tremendous.

The sun hangs for a moment on the top of a high mountain crowning the island on our right.  
3 Then it begins to sink. To us, this is the worst time of day. At sunset, all the devils of homesickness and  
4 worry begin to beset us. Pretty soon, we will be on  
F the battlefield, watching it go down, letting our imaginations carry us across the sea to homes and fields in Japan, where people are also watching the  
4 red sky. They are missing their men, the departed  
0 fathers, husbands, and brothers, pursuing the images  
- of loved ones into some lonely and unknown field.  
6 At the end of the day, this feeling seems to be in-  
8 evitable. It is pathetic to see big men become  
- strangely quiet at the approach of night. I think

to myself, "It's silly to entertain such emotions while we are still on the ship, floating in a Japanese bay. We haven't come far yet, I should say."

It has been a lazy day and I am not hungry. But, as always, we sent a scout down to the galley to discover what they will give us to eat. He has reported that baked tai-fish is on the menu. Splendid! I shall go down and enjoy that with the sake. Yes, for no reason that I can explain, I have begun to drink. Now I am going to end this letter. I will write soon again.

October 28, 1937

*Aboard the (Censored) Maru.*

Dear Brother:

Again today, there is the blue sky and the blue water. And here I am writing this while lying in the same position on the upper deck of the same boat. I wish this were being written at the front, but not yet. All I can tell you is about the soldiers, lolling about the boat, the pine groves and the winding, peaceful line of the Japanese coast. What will be our fate? Nobody knows. The speculation about our point of disembarkation is still going on.

Rumors that we are bound for Manchukuo are gaining strength.

They have a reliable source. Somebody who should know said that a party left before us, destined for Mukden, with orders to build barracks. It sounds reasonable.

Besides, there is a well-founded report that on the Shanghai front, where there has been a stalemate, our troops attacked and fought a ferocious battle. The story is that two days ago they advanced in force and rolled back the line for several miles, taking two important Chinese cities. They say that big lantern parades are swirling through the streets of Tokyo, in celebration. So the war is over! And we are to be returned, like victorious troops. That would be funny, in our case, but anyway, we are to be sent home soon!

Of course, it is nonsense, some absolutely ridiculous story. Yet we cannot avoid listening when someone talks in this vein. We cannot believe it and yet we do not wish to convince ourselves that it is not true. The future is still a blank.

One new thing has developed, lately. We have been practicing a landing drill. There are scores of small launches aboard this ship, and we have been practicing the method of launching them and row-

ing them toward shore. But, even for this fact, our optimists have an answer.

They claim it is only to give us exercise. However, most of us believe it is real preparation for the day when we will disembark in the face of a real enemy. Indeed, we do need exercise. We have slept and eaten and lounged about for three weeks, day after day, and some of the men are beginning to show the effects. They have gained weight and they act sluggish. Once in a while, Yamashita, a sergeant, conducts some gymnasium work on the upper deck, but that is not enough. Personally, I believe that those who consider the boat drill merely for exercise and those who think it is a genuine battle maneuver, are both right.

This sort of life, while it is bad for the men because it is too easy, is even worse for the war horses, down in the hatch. They have been stabled below decks, in a dark and unhealthy hole. Sometimes, you can see them, clear down in the hold, standing patiently in the darkness. Some have not survived so well. They have lost weight. Their ribs are showing and they look sickly.

They have the best in food and water. Actually, they get better care than the men. Does it surprise you to know that, in war, a horse may be much more valuable than a man? For example, the horses

get all the water they need. On the other hand, the supply of water for the men is limited, barely enough for washing, let alone the daily bath to which we are accustomed.

From that standpoint, the horses are much better off than we are. But the poor creatures have no opportunity for exercising, breathing fresh air and feeling the sunlight. They are growing weaker. With my own eyes, I have seen a number of them collapse from illness.

The veterinarians tried desperately to cure them, but none of those that fell ever arose again. The men worked over these dying animals as though they were children. Sometimes, long after a horse was dead, his handler, like a heartbroken parent, stayed at his side, petting him, murmuring soft words, watching with tear-blinded eyes. Many times, I have seen a man stand erect and salute before leaving the side of a dead horse.

When a horse dies, a steam winch lifts his body from the hold, hoists it over the side and into a small waiting boat. Then the body is carried to shore. So many of them have died.

I never look at a war horse, without thinking of poor Uhei Yoshida, who lives on the hillside, back of our town. In my memory, they are always together, just as they were before the war ever

came. It is impossible to disassociate one from the other.

Perhaps you do not remember Uhei. He was a carter. He had a wagon, with which he did hauling jobs. His horse, Kichizo, drew it.

In all my life, I have never known such affection between man and animal. Kichizo was a big, fine chestnut, with great, wide shoulders and chest, and a coat like velvet. It used to shimmer in the sun and you could see the muscles rippling underneath the skin. Uhei cared for Kichizo like a mother with a baby.

I suppose this can be explained, at least in part, by the fact that Uhei had no children. He was already past forty, but his wife had never conceived. Undoubtedly, Uhei long ago gave up hope of having a child. So all his affection turned toward Kichizo, the horse. You have heard fathers brag about their sons? In a way, he did the same thing about Kichizo. "What strength!" he would say, "and yet how gentle he can be. He's a dear fellow, that Kichizo, even though he is so big and strong."

Then the war came. It came clear down to our little town, into the nooks and corners of the country, taking men and horses. Kichizo was commandeered by the army.

When he heard the news, Uhei was speechless with surprise for a while. I remember it very well. "The army needs your horse, Uhei," someone told him. "It is for the nation." Uhei looked at the speaker with dumb disbelief in his face. His eyes were frozen, uncomprehending. "Don't worry," they told him, "Kichizo will be all right. He isn't a cavalry horse. He won't be in any danger. They'll use him behind the lines, to pull wagons. It won't be anything different than what he does here. And the army takes good care of its horses. They're very important. Don't you worry about him."

Uhei turned away without speaking and began to run toward his home. He broke into a dead run, like a crazy man, and we saw him disappear behind the bend in the road. "He'll be all right," somebody said, "after all, it's only a horse."

That same afternoon, Uhei came back to town. He looked different then. He was smiling and his eyes were shining, and he swaggered around the streets. "Have you heard the news?" he kept saying, "Kichizo, my horse, is going to the war. They need big strong fellows for the army, so of course Kichizo was the first horse they thought about. They know what they're doing, those fellows. They know a real horse when they see one."

He went to the flagmaker and ordered a long banner, exactly like the ones people have when a soldier is called to the war.<sup>2</sup>

"Congratulations to Kichizo on his entry into the army," this banner said, in large, vivid characters. Uhei posted a long pole in front of his house, high on the hillside, and attached this banner. It streamed out in the wind, where everyone could see. Uhei was bursting with pride. As soon as the banner was up, he took Kichizo out from the field and pointed up to where it floated gracefully above the house. "You see that, Kichizo," he said. "That's for you. You're a hero. You've brought honor to this village."

Meanwhile, Uhei's wife, O-Shin, was carrying this human symbolism even further. She bought a huge piece of cloth and began preparing a "thousand-stitches belt" for the horse.<sup>3</sup>

This cloth that O-Shin bought was big enough to cover four or five men. When she stood in the street, asking passers-by to sew a stitch, they all laughed, but they did it. She had a needle that she

<sup>2</sup> Organizations and schools and villages as well as individual friends do that. The name of the man whom they are congratulating is written on the banner, so that everyone will know and feel proud of the man and place he comes from—Translator.

<sup>3</sup> The Sennenburi, or "thousand-stitches belt," is a talisman, with red threads sewn by well-wishers for a Japanese soldier when he leaves for the front. It is supposed to protect him from wounds.

borrowed from a matmaker to do such a big piece of work. When the stitches were all in, she, herself, worked all through one night, finishing the belt. It was very difficult, with such a big needle, but she finished it.

They put the good-luck belt around Kichizo's middle, just as though he were soldier. At the same time, Uhei visited a number of different shrines in the neighborhood and bought lucky articles. O-Shin sewed them into the belt.

And finally, he gave a farewell party and invited all the neighbors. Uhei was not a rich man and he couldn't afford it. If he had any savings, they were all spent that night. I was among those he invited. I took, as a gift, a bottle of wine.

Most of the guests were already there, in Uhei's neat little house, by the time I arrived. They were in good humor, laughing and drinking. Uhei was excited and bustling around, seeing to everything. His eyes were glistening. "Yes, it's rare to find such a wonderful horse," he said. "You seldom find a horse with so much spirit and intelligence and at the same time so strong and vigorous. Oh, he'll show them! I'm so happy. Have a drink! Have many cups of wine for this happy occasion!"

There were tears rolling down his cheeks as he spoke and the bitter salt mingled with the wine he

was drinking. Everyone was making a noise, laughing and talking and roaring jokes. O-Shin kept hustling in and out of the kitchen, bringing hot food and warming the bottles of wine. She was a plain little thing, drab, I used to think. But that night, smiling and exuberant, she seemed transformed and almost beautiful.

When the party was at its height, Uhei suddenly jumped up from the table and ran outside. We heard the heavy clomp-clomp of a horse, walking through the front yard. And then, through an open window, Kichizo's long graceful neck came in. His head stretched all the way to the banquet table. He looked at us gravely; I again had the feeling that he knew all about this occasion, and knew it was for him, and what it meant.

Uhei ran into the room again and threw his arms around the horse's neck, and gave him boiled lobsters and some octopus, and poured the ceremonial wine into his mouth. "To Kichizo," he cried. "Dear, brave Kichizo!" We all stood and drank and roared "Banzai!" three times. It must have seemed a little silly and sentimental. Yet, Uhei had inoculated us all with something of the love he had for that horse and it seemed natural enough to us.

In the late afternoon of the next day, I saw Uhei at Hospital Hill, returning from the army station.

He had delivered Kichizo to them. I spoke to him, but he seemed not to recognize me, nor to have heard my voice, for he walked on a few paces. Then he turned and acknowledged the greeting in a distant, absent-minded sort of way. He looked haggard and sickly, as though he had lost his strength, and he left me hurriedly. All he said was "Kichizo has gone."

Later, someone told me how he brought the horse to the station. It was a terribly warm day. So Uhei took his own grass hat, cut two holes in the side for Kichizo's ears, and put it on the horse's head. Poor Kichizo, that heavy "thousand-stitches belt" must have been very warm and uncomfortable in such weather. Besides, Uhei had decorated him with national flags, so that he looked like some sacred animal, on the way to dedication at a shrine. I suppose he felt just that way about him.

O-Shin accompanied them, holding the reins, as they walked to the station. It was a curious and sad little trio, the man and woman with that great sleek horse in its strange attire, walking slowly down the hillside, through the village and up the other side. Everyone watched, silently. No one laughed.

At the army station, a good many other horses were already gathered together in the yard. They had already been examined by the army veteri-

narians before being accepted. Now they were merely waiting to be taken away on the train. No one knew just when it would come.

O-Shin left immediately, but Uhei stayed and stayed beside Kichizo, patting its hip and running his fingers through its mane. At first, the soldiers laughed, just as the people in the village had done. But they soon saw how Uhei felt about his horse and then they told him, kindly, "Don't cry, Uncle. It's a great promotion for your horse, isn't it? He is going to serve the nation now, instead of pulling a cart around this village. That's something, isn't it? Well, then, cheer up. Besides, he'll get better care in the army than you could ever give him. Don't you worry. He's going to be all right." So they tried to console Uhei. Nevertheless, he stayed until dark.

Early the next day, he was back at the army station, fussing over Kichizo. Of course, there was nothing to be done. The army grooms had already cared for and fed and watered the horses, but the poor man wanted to see for himself. He clucked around Kichizo like a hen with its chicks. Not that day, nor for several days afterward, did the train come to take the horses away.

It was quite a distance from Uhei's house to the army station, but he came every day, faithfully. He

came early and stayed until dusk. Someone described Uhei to me, saying, "Uhei-san is like a plant getting water in the hot summer sun every time he sees his horse."

At last the fatal day came. All the horses were loaded on the train, and taken to the near-by (censored) harbor, where they went aboard the transports. Uhei went along. He went as far as they would let him and then the grooms again told him not to worry, and promised they would take good care of Kichizo. He bowed, eyes brimming with tears. He bowed and bowed, and could only murble, "Thanks, thanks, very much."

As the boat moved out of the harbor, he ran up to a bridge overlooking the water. It was high above the water and he stayed there until the very smoke from the steamer had vanished beneath the horizon. He waved his flag and shouted, "Kichizo," until he was hardly able to speak. And he kept his eyes riveted on the spot where the ship had disappeared.

This is all I know about the story. When I was called to the front, he was the first to come and wish me luck and help me with my preparations. On the day I left, he came again to the harbor and begged me to look out for Kichizo. "You know him," he said, eagerly. "You couldn't miss him among a thousand horses. Anyway, he has a small

white spot on his left side and, on the opposite hip, the character ‘Kichi’ is branded. Oh, you couldn’t miss him.”

“If I see him, I’ll be sure and write to you,” I said.

“Remember, he’s a beautiful reddish chestnut,” Uhei continued. “Yes, tell me if you see him. And please say something to him about me. That would seem strange to you, wouldn’t it, talking to a horse? All right, but just pat him on the nose, once or twice.”

It seems cold and unkind of me, but only once have I asked about Kichizo since I came aboard this boat. The groom said he had not seen any such horse. Nor have I, although I have not tried to examine all the horses. But when I see one of them fall sick and die, and then go over the side to the small boat, I cannot help but recall poor Uhei. For his sake, I hope nothing like this has happened to Kichizo.

Well, I did not mean to discuss a horse in such terms, as though he were a human being. Yet, there is something close and warm in the love of a man for an animal. Isn’t it true?

Speaking of the “thousand-stitches belt” reminds me of a recent episode that may give you a clear insight into our minds and hearts, these days.

As you know, there is not a man aboard ship

without one of these belts. They encircle every waist and each stitch carries a prayer for safety. Mine is of white silk and has a number of charms sewed into it. I do not understand the symbolism connected with each. Some are Buddhist and the others Shinto. It makes no difference, of course. All are supposed to afford protection from wounds.

Our dear mother gave me an embroidered charm bag, which contains a talisman of the "Eight Myriads of Deities," and a "Buddha from Three Thousand Worlds". In addition to these, I have an image of the Buddha, three inches in height, of exquisite workmanship. This was a present from Watabe, who lives on the hillside. When he gave it to me, he said it had been through three wars. "No bullet ever touched the man who wore it," he said. "It is a wonderful charm." Three different soldiers carried it in the Boxer Rebellion, the first Sino-Japanese War, and the Russo-Japanese War. According to his story, they came through without a scratch.

The most imposing of all the gifts to me when I was called is a bullet-proof vest from Junichiro Nomura, one of my friends. It is made of nine strips of dried cuttlefish linked together like mail armor. The various sections were all taken from a female fish, which is supposed to enhance its virtue. And

a certain rule that I do not fully understand, regarding the number and disposition of the suckers, has been followed. It is held together by a special string, which was first blessed at one of the shrines. Finally, the whole vest was purified and blessed, before he gave it to me.

Well, it looks to me like nine pieces of dried fish and nothing more. I cannot see how it could stop a bullet, but he was so much in earnest about its powers that I took it and even wore it beneath my uniform before I left home.

If I put on all the charms that were given me, I would look like a beer barrel and it would be almost impossible to walk.

All the men on this ship are similarly loaded with tokens and amulets and belts and mementoes from their families and friends. One man has a very complicated charm, a bag hung with five-sen and ten-sen pieces. He explained it to me. It seems the idea is that five-sen comes next to four-sen—pronounced in Japanese “shi-sen”, which means “the boundary line of Death”. Likewise, ten-sen comes after nine-sen—pronounced “ku-sen”, meaning “desperate battle”. The significance is that the wearer will come through a desperate battle, near the boundary line of death, and into the realm of safety.

On warm days, when we take off our shirts, these

articles are seen everywhere. I do not mean to scorn them, but it would be interesting to study them all, with the superstitions they embody. However, one cannot disregard the heartfelt sentiment connected with them.

There was one man who did scoff at them; and in no uncertain terms, either. He no longer does so. This man, Corporal Tachibana, is quite a character. He says he is an atheist. He likes to talk about his ideas and he deliberately provokes arguments, in which he stoutly defends the materialistic point of view. In these, he employs big, pedantic words that so puzzle the men that they cannot reply. Personally, I doubt that he himself understands the meanings of all the words he uses.

Particularly when he has had a little wine, Corporal Tachibana used to like to ridicule the men about their charms and talismen. "Absurd," he would say. "Absolutely ridiculous! If we could really protect ourselves with such things, there never would be anyone killed in war. The Chinese would use them, too, and so would every other kind of soldier. Then what kind of a war could you have, if nobody was killed? It is nonsense, and it is not befitting for a member of the imperial army to do such things."

Of course, this was perfectly true and the men

knew it. But still they believed in their pitiful little articles, the luck charms. To me, it seemed cruel and heartless of him. If he himself preferred not to place any stock in these ideas, very well. But why should he shake the faith of simple men who did? Strangely enough, however, he himself had a "thousand-stitches belt," around his middle.

One day recently, when it was very hot, we were all on the upper deck, lying in the shade. Suddenly, without a word, Corporal Tachibana jumped over the side and landed with a magnificent splash. He is not a good swimmer and, when the foam and spray disappeared, we saw him sink. Then he reappeared, churning the water with his arms and legs. Immediately, two of the men stripped and dove in after him. At the cry, "Man overboard," a boat was lowered.

They pulled him into the boat and finally brought him up on deck again. His raddled, dripping hair was hanging over his face and his hairy stomach was throbbing like a globefish. In his right hand was his "thousand-stitches belt"!

As soon as he caught his breath, he laughed shortly and said, "This easy life has made me careless." He explained that when he pulled off his shirt, his safety belt came with it and the wind blew

it into the sea. When he saw it fluttering into the water, he jumped after it.

"Not because I was afraid of being shot, if I lost it," he said, grinning. "I don't believe it can protect me in war. But my folks were so sincere about it that I couldn't just lose it in the ocean, this way. So I had to get it."

He must have thought we did not believe him, for he added, "The prayers of my people, reflecting on my brain, made me do it." Men who had been listening to him, with sly smiles on their faces, suddenly grew serious. The joking stopped. Inadvertently, it seemed to me, he had denied his own arguments and revealed a belief little different from that of the other men. Unconsciously, I put my hand on my own belt.

We had two landing drills today and actually went ashore. For a few moments, I felt strange and slightly ill as we stood on land after having been on the gently moving ship for so long. Still we were happy. The beach, even through my thick army shoes, seemed tender and sweet. We landed near a village, or rather a cluster of ten shabby huts belonging to fishermen.

I must tell you about the outfit that we carry in these drills. Out of curiosity, one of the men

weighed himself in full landing equipment. The scale showed that we are carrying slightly more than seventy-two pounds on our backs. This does not include ammunition. We have received no bullets yet. The outfit is composed of a military kit, a blanket, a water bottle, a gas mask, and so on. We all laughed when we saw each other rigged in this way. We looked like beggars, carrying our households with us. It is almost impossible to walk properly under such a load.

In this drill, we also carried arms and canisters for bullets. Some of the men had their rifles and some special squads brought machine guns. The small boats, about which I have spoken, bore us toward shore. We were instructed to jump into the water and wade as soon as the craft touched bottom. It is not as easy as it sounds, particularly burdened as we are and considering the pitching and rolling of the launches. A good many of the men flopped into the water when they jumped.

Immediately on reaching the beach, we are supposed to lie flat on our stomachs, hugging the earth and making ourselves as small as possible. My first thought was that it was very pleasant to stretch out like that in the cold damp sand. But when I began considering the significance of this maneuver, I got a cold chill; and not from the water, either.

I am not well-acquainted with the history of war, but I am told that these landings are terribly costly. The beach is flat and open, without the least protection. Assuming that the enemy is within rifle shot, every man is an exposed target, long before he emerges from the water. And, while he is wading, waist-deep, through the surf, the enemy has ample time to aim and fire at him. I do know that we had countless casualties in the landing at Shanghai.

Our transport is making its fifth trip to China. One day, I was talking about this landing problem with a member of the crew who had seen the previous attack. "It was simply unbelievable," he said, referring to the time our men went ashore under enemy guns at Woosung, in the mouth of the river. He said no more and I did not feel like questioning him. I have my own ideas about the meaning of that word, "unbelievable".

No matter how dangerous the task may be, we must go through with it. And we should have no fear. But it is not easy to imagine such an action without a little uneasy anticipation.

However that may be, we went ashore today and although it was a relief, at first, to be back on dry land, my mood soon changed to one of great disappointment, almost despair. We carried out a small maneuver, marching only nine miles, yet I discov-

ered that I have become very weak. I suppose the soft life aboard ship has caused it. Several times I felt so tired and dizzy that I thought I would have to suffer the great disgrace of dropping out of line, but I managed to endure it. I puffed and panted, quickly emptied my canteen of the last drop of water, and acquired such an array of blisters on my feet that I could not move for three days afterward.

So much for today, I will write again soon.

November 2, 1937

Aboard Ship.

Dear Brother:

The transport is finally moving, ploughing through black ocean toward some unknown spot. Nothing has yet been told us about our destination. After the evening meal tonight, I went up to the deck and stood, engulfed in a sea of darkness. The murmuring of the water, the soft sigh and swish as the ship slips through was the only sound. All transports, supply ships and convoys are under light control, so that on all sides there is nothing but a blank black wall. It is an eerie sensation, slipping thus through the immense of the dark sea and sky a lonely sensation.

The men gathered in groups about the deck, but there was none of the usual talking and laughing. Occasionally, a whisper floats down the wind but nothing more. Once the ship actually got under way, the chattering mouths of our men were sealed. An indescribable feeling, a lump of emotion heavy as a stone, hangs beneath our hearts. We sense the approach of—what? No one can say, yet everyone feels it.

It is a strange silent night. All around, in the darkness are fiery red dots, like fireflies. They are cigarettes, stabbing the black curtain. There is no sound, except the rhythmic, monotonous throb of the engines. My body seems to tremble in tune with them. This is the very moment, in fiction, when someone should begin to sing in a low and melancholy voice. Gradually, other voices would join in the chorus until the sound swells and billows like a cloud.

What a splendidly dramatic scene! Yes, there is the song. Someone up forward has begun, "How far we have come from the homeland." Others take up the song. I want to remain apart, free from this sentiment, but I cannot . . . "'Tis the land of Manchuria, far, far from home." Hot tears course down my cheeks. Yes, even as I write, I am bitterly weeping.

This is a night and this is a moment to draw one's

thoughts irresistibly toward home. How is everybody? What are you all doing? What joy it would be, just to be with you! The singing continues. First is "War Friend", and then "Dawn in Camp". Oh, they will spend all night singing. And here I am, writing to you, longing for the dear faces and the familiar scenes. Good night, my brother, may all of you sleep well.

November 4, 1937

Aboard Ship.

Dear Brother:

These words that I am writing may be the last you will ever have from me. We are landing tomorrow morning at three o'clock.

The news is finally out. Our destination is not Manchuria, or the Siberian border, or Canton. We are going ashore in the heart of the battle area, at Pei-sha, on Hangchow Bay. The whole region is strongly entrenched and well-fortified. No detail of this was spared us, tonight, when the enemy positions were shown on the map. Symbols in red ink marked machine-gun nests and concrete fortifications. Behind them were a series of wriggling red lines—trenches, fully manned. The main force has

been ordered to strike at the village of Chinshan-wei. The Arakawa unit, opening the attack, will veer to the extreme right to protect the flanks.

Tomorrow at this time, I will be on shore, in China, in enemy country. Alive or dead, who can say? I do not think about it. At any rate, since a fearful battle is expected, we have been given permission to mail our letters.

The officers did say that there is considerable question as to whether the enemy is entrenched in any strength on the actual shore. Their positions appear to be back some distance. It is just possible that we can walk ashore with no more difficulty than we did the other day in that fishermen's village. A small embankment, some seven feet high, is beyond the beach. Once that is climbed, the whole story, for better or worse, will be plain before us.

There is a good deal of hustle and bustle tonight, making last-minute preparations. Instead of knapsacks, emergency rucksacks made of tent cloth have been stitched up. In addition to the usual equipment, we are carrying bamboo ladders for crossing the many creeks and streams that crisscross this region, and for scaling walls. Everyone has a beer bottle full of fresh water. The passwords are " (censored) " and " (censored) ".

Ammunition has been distributed, in double lots.

The reason for this is that, in the confusion of heavy battle, men or groups of men may be cut off from the rear. They must have enough ammunition to defend themselves until assistance comes.

The weight of so many bullets is overwhelming. Somebody remarked that the bullets alone are enough to crush a man. Minato, the only veteran among us, laughed grimly. He went through the Manchurian campaign, six years ago, and was decorated. "Bullets are the only thing you can depend on at the front," he said. "You'll cherish them more than food or water. You will find out."

The last evening meal was a silent affair. No one spoke. There was none of the usual joking. The men hardly even glanced at each other. They kept their eyes on their rice bowls and their faces were masks, blank and unrevealing. Wine was distributed, but we each took only a little bit. It seemed to warm and encourage the men and then they talked a little. But all they said was, "Let's hold out," monotonously repeated.

Before tonight, we all joked about war and fighting in a thoughtless, uncomprehending way. Someone would say, "You are certain to be killed first." And the man to whom he spoke would retort, "Not me. I think you will be the first victim. Look! Your shadow is already growing thinner." Still another

said to a man from his same village, "What a pity to leave such a good-looking bride behind you. But don't worry. I will take care of her, better than you could. So go ahead and die." They were so serene.

But now the moment is at hand, there is no room for this sort of talk. As a squad leader, I have had a small duty which I have performed. I told my men, "It is a real satisfaction to die in battle, like a petal falling from the mountain cherry tree. Let us have courage and fight well, hand-in-hand to the last minute. If I am hit, Sakagami, you take command and advance." This is all I could say. Words are empty and meaningless. We speak to each other with hearts and souls now.

It is getting late now, my brother. I must rest. With luck and safety, this will not be my last letter. And think of it, from now on there will be news of actual fighting at the front. No more soldiers lolling about under the blue sky. I feel a great strain and I can say no more. Please give these letters to the family.

*To Father:* Father, I hope you have been well. At last, we are going into battle, landing tomorrow at Hangchow Bay. I shall do my best, as you would wish. Good-by.

To Mother: Tomorrow, we are going to face enemy fire. I know the charm you made for me will protect me from harm. It is a great undertaking that you may have to face, taking care of my family, but remember that your daughter-in-law and your grandchildren love you and look upon you as the center of our home. Be good to them always and pray that your son may bring merit and distinction to our house. Take the best care of yourself. Good-by, Mother.

To My Wife: The great moment has come. To me, there is no tomorrow. I know well what you are thinking about, my dear wife. But be calm and serene. Take care of the children.

To My Son: Takeshi, dear, your daddy is going to fight with the Chinese soldiers soon. Do you remember the big sword that your granddaddy gave me? With it, I shall cut and stab and knock down enemy soldiers, like your beloved hero, Iwami Jutarō. Your daddy is going to bring home a sword and a steel Chinese helmet as a souvenir for you.

Takeshi, dear, I want you to be a good boy, always. Be nice to your Mummy and Grandmummy and all your teachers. Love your brothers and sister, and study so that you may become a great man. I

see your little figure on the pier, waving a flag in your little fist. Your daddy cherishes that picture forever in his mind. Takeshi, Banzai! Daddy, Banzai!

November 6, 1937  
At Sung-lin-chen, China.

Dear Brother:

This is my first letter to you from the front. It will have to be hurried, for we are to march through the night starting at four o'clock this afternoon. I want to tell you about the landing, yesterday.

After I finished my letter to you from the boat, I lay down and tried, without success, to sleep. Everyone was doing the same thing, pretending. In actual fact, we were all wide-awake and many were staring fixedly at some particular corner of the ceiling, as though it were the most interesting thing they had ever seen. They were tense, restless. Long before two o'clock, that morning, some of them rose and began preparing for the landing. I heard someone say, "Don't forget your ticket to Paradise." Another man laughed and replied that he had it in his hand. He meant the metal identification plate.

Previously, the ship had come to anchor. We

heard her engines slow and then cease altogether. Not a light showed anywhere on board. It was a strange and exciting sensation to realize that we were in Chinese waters, very close to the land. The section commander entered. His face was grim and set. He gave the order for us to get ready.

It occurred to me that I should shave. As I told you many of us let our beards grow. We had amused ourselves in comparing the length and joking about our appearance. But it seemed to me, now, that I did not want to be killed and found with this ugly black fringe on my face. So I wet my face with cold water, applied the soap, and tried to get it off. It was long and tough, and it hurt. I noticed a number of men doing the same thing.

And then came the order we had been awaiting all these days, "Board the launches!" It was the voice of the commander, on the upper deck.

I suddenly had an irresistible desire to go to the toilet. I had already been there, two or three times during the night, but still it seemed I must go again. I was heavily loaded with my landing equipment, but I went anyway. The place was crowded. One by one, the men were making their way toward the deck, eyes fixed and unseeing, faces grim and motionless.

It was pitch black on deck. On our right, like two

fiery eyes, two red lights shone from the shore. They were the only things you could see in the whole world, at that moment. Someone whispered, "That's a signal marker, to show us the place to land." At the same moment, someone squeezed my hand and whispered, "Mr. Squad Commander, let's do our best." The whisperer was close to my ear, but I could not see him.

Perhaps it was the consciousness that the enemy, armed and probably ready, was so close at hand that made us so silent. The stillness was like a blanket. Somewhere in that black wall that we faced were Chinese soldiers. It was easy to imagine them, whispering as we were and training their rifles in our direction.

Then the men began to go aboard the launches. The metallic rattle of our gear, as we moved, sounded faintly all around. We went down rope ladders. As I descended, I could hear the water gurgling around the sides of the launch. Suddenly, I was in the boat.

It was still impossible to identify each other. However, I had counted my men as they entered the launch, so I answered in the affirmative when the section leader asked if all were aboard. The launch engine then puffed and snorted and suddenly began to roar with a thunderous series of ex-

plosions that seemed to me would warn every Chinese within a thousand miles of our presence. We felt the boat move. Unconsciously, my eyes turned toward the hull of the mother ship, a darker splotch than the surrounding darkness. It seemed friendly and protecting. We could hear the other boats around us, but no word was audible as we slipped smoothly into the darkness.

Suddenly, the motor coughed, choked and died. Accident! I saw the navy engineer tampering with the motor, but it did not start again. And then I realized that we were in a fairly strong current, for the shadow of the mother ship faded rapidly to our left, as we were carried downstream. We tried to signal with our pocket flashes, but there was no answering signal from the decks. Another launch passed near us and we shouted. But no reply.

It might have been a very dangerous accident, if we had drifted helplessly far downstream, away from the main force. In an hour, the dawn would break and we would be visible from shore. Because of the darkness, it was impossible to gauge the speed of our movement, but we could tell we were receding. The engineer continued to work over the motor. It took him about twenty minutes before it started again. We raced to get back into position. How it was done in the darkness, I do not know.

In the distance, the two red balls glowed, unwinkingly. All around us, like the roar of a million guns, the launches sounded. It occurred to me that the Chinese might also see that signal on shore and wait for us there. Someone, as though answering my unspoken question, said the light was so constructed as to throw its rays in only one direction.

I heard the section commander again asking about us, the 2nd Squad. I ordered the men to count off in the darkness. All thirteen responded. "Is everyone all right?" I asked. "Yes," someone said. I recognized the voice of Tonari, a private.

On and on went the launch. We seemed to have been traveling for hours. Actually, it was probably only a few minutes. And we waited, expecting at any instant to hear the sound of enemy fire. I realized that my hands were gripping my rifle so hard that they hurt. The men mounted our machine gun on the bow of the launch and we all lay down on the floor, huddling closely together. I realized that someone was lying heavily across my feet.

Meanwhile, the dawn had begun to break. The inky blackness was slowly suffused with lead gray, a gray that tinged the water and everything within view with its own peculiar color. It was still impossible to see land. In the gathering light, I could see, when I raised my head, the wreaths of mist, rising

lazily ahead of us. Whether they marked the shore line, some low and steaming mud flat, or whether they came directly from the water, I could not determine.

We were touching land before we knew it. As I half knelt, looking ahead, the launch slithered into shallow water and went aground. "Over the side, quickly," shouted the section commander.

Instantly, I was in the water. It reached to my knees and I gasped from the shock of contact with its icy cold. None of us was wearing shoes. We had been outfitted with some especially heavy socks, that had rubber soles. Now we knew the reason. Mud! It would have been nearly impossible to walk through it in army shoes. It clung to our feet like tar, sucking away with every step so that each movement was a strain. My feet seemed to sink instantly into this sticky glue, as I waded painfully forward. It may have been a form of quicksand.

We pushed ahead, through a gray and misty world. Gradually, we emerged from the water and found ourselves on a flat, muddy shore. It was so level that water and earth seemed to melt together. Any slight rise in the water would have sent it flooding over the whole flat. Not even now could we see anything, nor had we heard anything. It did not occur to me that one phase of the landing, perhaps

the most dangerous part, was now finished. We were out of the water, finished with the wading where a man must move slowly and lumberingly. We were actually on land. I tried to identify this shore as it had appeared on the maps, to locate some mark. It was impossible. Nothing looked as I had imagined it.

In the landing drills that I have told you about, we deployed immediately on reaching the shore. Now, automatically, we did this. A few more steps and then someone murmured that there was a black object lying dead ahead. Perhaps it was the bank that we had been told about. Cautiously, we advanced toward it. It gradually took shape and appeared to be a sort of pier, built of logs, probably used for fishing at high tide. It was very quiet.

Then, without warning, there came the pumping cough of a light machine gun on our left. Every eye turned in that direction, but we could see nothing, nor hear the ugly twang of flying bullets. Almost in the same split second, there was the crackle of rifle fire and the deeper undertone of heavy machine guns. The thought flashed through my mind that some of our men were under fire, but that we were, so far, unobserved.

Light was coming fast now and I could make out other piers, like the one we first sighted, and also a

sort of tower that appeared to have metal sides. Whang! It sounded as though someone had plucked a piano wire with a steel hook. The bullet passed close to my head. I fell flat on my face in the mud, pressing against it with all my might. The men did likewise. They went down like ninepins. And then a hail of bullets flew over us. Just ahead, I could see tiny pin points of light, from the explosions of rifles or machine guns, I knew not which.

We were in a bad position, exposed on a level mud flat. It was now sufficiently light to show us that we were still about 800 yards from dry land, 800 yards of open space between us and the position from which the shots were coming. I gave the order to fix bayonets. Then, half creeping, half wriggling, we advanced as best we could. We already were completely caked with mud. "Space yourselves," I called, "stay as far apart as possible." The bullets were coming faster and faster, but so far none of us was hit. We could not see the enemy.

I changed direction, veering sharply toward the left, and the men followed. Bit by bit, we crossed the flat. Suddenly, to my surprise, I saw a company of our machine gunners ahead of us. They were advancing more rapidly, in spite of the fire from ahead.

A soldier near us suddenly staggered and fell. Two or three of his comrades stopped beside him,

but almost instantly an army nurse appeared and told them to go ahead. The nurse began examining the man. We did not wait to see more. It was just an incident, hardly real, without meaning.

The next thing I saw was our section commander, naked sword in hand, marching erect. We all leaped to our feet and followed, breaking into a dead run. In an instant, we reached one of the log piers, and hurdled over the side. I expected, there, to find the Chinese and to plunge into a hand-to-hand fight. It was empty!

We were now beneath the bank, rimming the shore, that had been outlined on the maps. Standing in the lee of this, we were safe from the rifle fire, which suddenly, magically ceased. The enemy must have been waiting, with their guns mounted on top of the bank. They fled when we emerged from the mist.

It was a moment's breathing space and I took advantage of it. I was breathless with excitement and from running, and I hastily sat down, hauling the canteen from my belt. Sweat poured down from my temples. I gulped water so fast that it spilled over my face and ran down my uniform.

Then I looked around at the men. All were safe. We glanced at each other and, for the first time, saw what strange apparitions we had become. Our

hands, faces, uniforms, helmets, guns—all were smeared with mud. It clung to our cheeks and little rolls of it hung in our eyebrows, beneath which our red, bloodshot eyes rolled as excitedly as those of demons. At first, we were mutually startled. Then, we burst into roars of laughter. It broke the tension. We relaxed and indescribable warmth surged up inside me, a sensation of security and well-being. It was glorious, miraculous, just to be alive. Life was sweet and good.

But we had only a moment of this. The order came, almost immediately, to advance again and we went up the bank. Ahead were trees, and we saw shadowy figures darting in and about them. Someone raised his rifle and tried to sight on them, but someone else called, "Wait! That may be some of our own men." There was another bank, dropping more gently than the one on shore and, as we started down the sides, my foot caught in a creeper. I fell heavily.

Almost at the same moment, again on our left, there came a terrific burst of machine-gun fire. It was answered by another from some point near at hand. Our men had established contact with the enemy. The sound of battle swelled and became an inferno. Bullets were flying in all directions. We, in our position, could see nothing. We crept forward

through the underbrush, bent double, or occasionally flat on the ground. Bullets whined above and around us, snipping off the leaves and sinking with a dull "chunk" into the mud. Finally, we reached another sharp rise of ground and again halted.

Again the canteens came out. We were all perspiring and breathless, whether from excitement or exertion would be hard to say. Shirahashi, a private, uncorked a bottle of fizzy cider and passed it among us. I took a long pull. It tasted so good that my throat seemed to ache. All our senses were sharpened, accentuated, by the excitement and the danger. Everything seemed to come to us in more vivid colors than it would normally have done.

I finally got up and moved away a short distance, trying to reconnoiter the ground. Near by, I saw Commander Shimizu, resting a moment with another group of our men. There was a gentle smile on his face, and he seemed calm and poised as ever. "Nice little adventure, eh, Corporal?" he said.

We were in some badly broken ground. It looked as though it originally might have been some kind of farm. Ditches for irrigation ran in every direction. The land was not well-cleared. There were evidences, too, that the Chinese had been here, in force. We could see where their machine guns had been mounted and where the ammunition had been

piled. Here and there the ground was littered with empty machine-gun cartridges. They must have abandoned a good position rapidly, firing a few bursts and then withdrawing as rapidly as we advanced.

While I watched, a goat and two chickens came wandering out from the straw huts, as serene and unconcerned as though the nearest war were on the other side of the world. Takahashi, one of the soldiers, saw them almost at the same moment that I did and one of the chickens suffered the immemorial fate of its breed. Takahashi caught it, but was unable to get the other. "Our dinner, tonight at least, is now assured," he said and, sitting down, began immediately to pluck the prize. Meanwhile, someone told us that the wounded man was not seriously injured. A bullet had passed right through his thigh. But it was our first casualty and it made a deep impression on all who saw it.

After a short rest, we resumed our advance, marching cautiously down the right bank of a creek that ran through this tangled terrain. We soon met a machine-gun company and Kato, the commander, was bursting with pride. He told us his unit had flanked the Chinese, shortly after the landing, surprised a large force and sent it into disorderly retreat. The whole flank of the Chinese line crumpled.

When the machine gunners occupied the former enemy position, they found five corpses literally riddled with bullets, Kato said.

This may have been the reason for the comparatively easy advance our unit had been able to make. Apparently caught between Japanese forces attacking on two sides, the enemy was thrown into confusion and went into quick retreat as an alternative to being trapped and annihilated. It was difficult to follow all the different movements of our men and of the Chinese. At the time when these were taking place, it was impossible. The whole battle was a confused, moiling movement of troops, friend and foe alike threading their ways through the maze of creeks and tangled underbrush. Only afterward could anyone tell what had happened.

The same condition continued, now, as we started forward again. A rain of bullets came from our right. We dropped to the ground and began creeping ahead. Further in the distance, several columns of thick black smoke suddenly rose to the sky. Some of the Japanese must have reached that point and set fire to enemy huts or buildings. In a momentary silence the faint crackle of flames could be heard. We ourselves set fire to all Chinese huts or sheds that we found, in order to prevent them from being used as places of concealment. Several times, we

were surprised to hear terrific explosions in these burning hovels, indicating that hand grenades or, perhaps, even shells had been stored inside.

The creek wound tortuously through the foliage. I saw three scouts from the 3rd Squad suddenly leap to their feet and sprint ahead, dodging and twisting among the underbrush. There was no sign of a road. We continued to advance, beneath an unceasing fire of rifles and machine guns that we could not see. So far as I could tell, however, we had no casualties.

At last a fairly large house, with white walls, came into view. We encircled it on three sides and trained machine guns on every door and window and crevice. Our fire was answered and, for a brief space, a hot engagement ensued. In the smoke and confusion, it was difficult to spot the exact places where the enemy had mounted their machine guns, but the guns were there, spraying us with lead, like water from a hose. They were invisible to us and we to them. The Japanese were deployed in a semi-circle, taking full advantage of every tree, rock and depression in the ground, and firing steadily at the big house. Suddenly, I saw one of our men draw back his arm and throw a hand grenade toward the house. Before it struck, he had sent another into the air and another. Three deafening explosions shook

the ground and the whole house was bathed in clouds of thick smoke.

With a yell, we jumped to our feet and ran toward the place. But now there was no answering fire. Either the grenades had landed squarely among the Chinese machine gunners, or had frightened them into retreat. At any rate, they were silenced. Nothing but the body of a dead soldier was seen.

Then it began to rain. The rest of the day was a strange, tangled nightmare of slogging through the mud, sometimes hip-deep in the dirty, turgid creeks, always soaked to the skin, loading and firing incessantly, and incessantly dodging from bush to bush and from shelter to shelter. The bright red of burning structures and the sound of bullets streaking viciously around me is part of this memory. I never knew in what direction we went, nor how far. All I know is that we pressed forward and the enemy slipped backward, ghostlike. Here and there we came across their dead and wounded. Once, we caught a brief glimpse of about twenty Chinese, running from a village. A machine gunner swung the nose of his weapon toward them and pressed the triggers. The gun chattered and three of them fell, as though they had tripped in the creepers.

Through the din, a queer, thin sound, like the

whistle of a flute, penetrated to us. At home, we would have thought it was a noodle merchant, trundling his cart through the streets. Here, it was something else again. Almost immediately, the enemy fire increased to a regular hurricane. Somewhere, near at hand, they counterattacked. My unit jumped into an irrigation trench, ready for the assault. But it did not touch us. Elsewhere, our men came to grips with the Chinese. One of our officers was killed and we suffered a great many wounded. Then, as suddenly as they appeared, the Chinese were gone again.

We came upon another small, thatch-roofed farmhouse, apparently deserted. I entered, found nothing, went outside and was walking around some strawstacks when my eye caught the glint of blue and I stopped. Thrusting my rifle ahead of me, I jumped toward the object, expecting to find an enemy soldier.

It was only an old woman, a very old woman, clutching a little girl in her lap. Both were trembling with fear. The child buried its face in the woman's breast. Near by was an old man, his face deeply wreathed in wrinkles. He gripped a cane and stared at me with a dull, vacant expression. My bayonet was pointing directly at the old woman and she clutched the child to her with a convulsive motion,

at the same time holding out her hands as though to ward off the expected thrust. My heart bled for these old and defenseless people. "Poor old woman," I said, "why didn't you get away from here before the fighting started?" Of course, they did not understand Japanese and yet I believe she must have felt, intuitively, what I was saying. Her tired old eyes turned from the bayonet point and swept over the cultivated lands around us, taking in the irrigation ditches, the rice paddies, and the piles of harvested rice. It was their home. Confused and paralyzed with fear, they could only sit there and wait for whatever must come. As I stood there, a bullet whined through the air and buried itself in the strawstacks, a few feet away. The old woman twitched and cried out, slightly. The little girl cautiously moved her head and peeped at me for an instant, then turned away again. We left this and marched away.

Sometime later, and I do not know what part of the day it was, we were caught in a bad position. It was then that I thought I should never see the light of another day.

As I told you, the swift flow of battle, the flux and movement of different groups, going in different directions, was all very confused and tangled. Our duty, at the beginning of the attack, had been

very clear. We were in the right wing, entrusted with the task of fighting off any flanking movements by the Chinese, which would have endangered the entire force. Runners kept us in touch with the troops on either side of us and of our own relative position. Finally, we had advanced to the foot of a rounded, sloping hill, on the top of which were four houses. Some enemy troops apparently were manning them and we were about to charge up the slope when word came that some units on our own flank had been trapped at the coast.

Thus it was, a battle that seemed to be a series of concentric circles, one within the other. We tried to move off immediately and relieve the endangered group, but we were caught in a cross fire between a group of pillboxes on our right and from the houses on the hill in front of us, where the Chinese had placed machine guns. All we could do now was to fight with the enemy on the hilltop to reach the beleaguered unit. In an effort to approach the hill, we were finally brought to a shallow creek, facing an open field some two hundred yards in width. To have tried to cross it would have been suicidal, since we would have been within plain view of Chinese machine gunners on two sides. A low bank, less than a foot high, afforded some shelter on the edge of

this creek and we hastily deployed behind it, to examine the situation.

The Chinese in the houses on top of the hill immediately swung their guns toward us and raked the embankment with a withering fire. The bullets spattered into the mud, kicking up little clouds, but none of us was hit. I saw one Chinese, apparently directing the fire. He stood in the window of one of the houses, exposing himself fearlessly. Meanwhile, Naito, our machine gunner, hoisted his weapon to the top of the shallow breastwork and fired. As he heard me mutter, "Too high," he depressed the nose of the gun. Then it was too low. He changed it, the barest fraction, and again pressed the trigger. We saw the latticework of the window splinter and fall to the ground, and a cloud of dust billowed around the window where one of the guns had been. It must have silenced the battery completely, for there was no more fire from there, nor did the range finder show himself again.

It is odd how the sound of one's own guns can be such sweet music. When the enemy is firing, the explosions and whistle of the bullets seem ugly and vicious in the extreme. But when it is your own fire that you hear, it sounds pleasant, almost friendly.

I turned my head and saw that some more of our

men had taken a position behind us, sheltered from the fire from the houses by a slight rise in the ground. I then saw that my squad had advanced ahead of the line and was in a sort of salient, from which we could be reached by Chinese fire from several different directions. The din was terrific, all the while.

"Go to the right," I yelled at the unit behind us. "We can't advance if you don't." My voice was drowned in the roar of the rifles and machine guns. Impatiently, I yelled a second time. "Why don't you follow us? Come on!" But they could not hear.

Then, in the distance there was a deeper note, a heavy, lazy boom that reverberated over the whole scene. In an instant, something that sounded like a locomotive crossing a bridge thundered over our heads; there was a terrific explosion on the hill near the houses. The navy was giving us a covering fire. Thus far, no heavy artillery had been brought into action by either side. But now we knew that our own ships, in the bay, were opening fire.

Several other shells dropped near by. Next, some naval airplanes made their appearance. They were flying very high at first, but then they began to circle lower and lower over the four houses that blocked our advance. They looked like hawks as they began to dive. The roar of their motors was greater than

all the other sounds put together. They plummeted straight toward the earth, then suddenly leveled off and shot upward. As they made the turn, they released bombs, and fountains of earth and smoke rose upward. We could not see whether they had hit the houses or not.

Immediately afterward, a shell from one of the ships landed squarely on the tiles of one of the houses. It smashed in a big hole, and the whole place shuddered and trembled. I thought this must surely end the resistance, but it did not. Fighting bravely, the Chinese continued to sweep the ground below and the sky above with their machine guns. I had a moment's worry lest the navy gunners, not knowing we were so close to the hill, might drop a shell on us. We could feel the detonations and the displacement of air as the shells landed, we were so close. But they continued to fly over our heads, striking the houses until it seemed to me that nothing could live through such a bombardment. The airplanes returned and bombed the position from the air, and then there was silence.

I thought that part of the engagement was over, but, a little while later, the Chinese started firing again from the same position and the bullets began to sing just the same. We were still lying almost glued behind the flimsy embankment. I noticed that

the rain had stopped, but the sky was dark and cloudy, and it was impossible to tell the time of day. I looked at my wrist watch, but it was broken. The glass was shattered and the face was badly smeared with mud.

The tired men dropped to the ground, lit cigarettes and began chattering, as though nothing more serious than maneuvers had been taking place. I was surprised. They began talking about women and food, and anything but the war. Personally, with night coming along, I was gripped by a deep anxiety over our position. It seemed to me that we were in very great danger, unless it could be consolidated in some way. I tried not to show my feelings.

Then all of a sudden I heard someone shout, "Norimoto, first grade, has been killed." He was a dispatch rider. All day, he had been dashing back and forth between one unit and another, carrying messages of the section chiefs. Something like resentment welled up in my heart when I heard of his death. I felt like charging toward the enemy to avenge him.

Then another voice called, "Second Squad! Fall back!"

"What? Fall back? Why should we? Whose order is this?" I cried. I was angry at this order coming on top of the news we had just heard. I wanted

anything at that moment but to fall back. Then Yoshida, another messenger, came wriggling across the ground to us, with the order to retreat. A company was being formed to attack a village at some other point and we were not going to relieve the endangered unit.

Then another voice called, "Why don't you fall back? Hurry up, there!" I turned and saw the company commander, peering over one side of the mound. So I gave the order to withdraw, telling the men to drop out of line one by one, bending low. The air was thick with bullets. Finally, I was alone. My heart beat fast when my turn came to leave the shelter, precarious as it was, and jump into the open with bullets around me. I gave myself no time to think of it, but leaped to my feet and ran, bending double. It gave me a strange feeling to expose my back to the enemy. I could almost feel the impact of a bullet. Five feet, ten feet, ten yards—would I never get there. Then, after an eternity in that open space with bullets for companions, I hurtled into a ditch, headfirst, and landed in the knee-deep water.

The others were there, all safe. We all burst into laughter when we looked at each other. Everyone was covered with mud and dripping with reddish slime. "This is a dirty war," I gasped, wiping the muck out of my eyes and mouth.

Half wading, we sloshed down this ditch toward the main company. Most of the men were looking at a house, some two hundred yards in the rear. Their faces were intent, serious. Some soldiers carrying a stretcher suddenly emerged from it and hurried through the smoke and bullets to an ambulance, sheltered near by. It was the transportation of the first dead soldier's body. It made a profound impression on us, but we did not talk about it, for that seemed like talking about our own fate.

We fell into column and began marching toward the spot where we were going to attack. We looked like a parade of clay dolls. Finally, we came out to a highway, within sight of the sea. Floating in the bay were (censored) gunboats and transports. It was a comforting sight. Eventually, we came to a temple, the Temple of the Maiden, and, finding it had become headquarters for the detachment, we halted and fell out.

We stacked our arms, washed in a near-by stream and ate our first food of that day. The meal was a mixture of steamed rice and wheat.

As I ate, I sat beside Sublieutenant Yamazaki, the section leader. In a low voice, he told me about the death of Norimoto. He said the messenger had been sitting near him, while an order was being written. A bullet whistled very near, but the officer

paid no attention to it. A moment later, when the dispatch was finished, he turned to hand it to Norimoto and found him on the ground, blood gushing from his mouth. The bullet had struck him right in the mouth and he had fallen over without a sound. The sublieutenant picked him up, but Norimoto could not speak.

"He looked at me," he said, "and then his eyes turned toward his right hand, which was just touching the ground. He touched the earth and seemed to be trying to write something. Whatever it was, he never finished. Then I had to go. But before I left, I wrote on the ground, in large characters 'The Spot of Norimoto's Death.' I found a wild flower and placed it in his hand. It's such a shame."

Of course, other of our men had been killed, too, on this first day in battle. Norimoto having been the first, and having died in this manner, made more of an impression on us. Besides, Sublieutenant Yamazaki described Norimoto's death with such impressive pictures. Before the war, he had been something of a poet. His writings regularly appeared in a magazine called *Poetry and the Poetic Mind*. He could not express himself otherwise when Norimoto died. And so this casualty affected us all more deeply than the others.

Night came on, a pitch-black night, and more

rain. We snatched a little rest inside the temple and then were ordered out for sentry duty. We crossed the stream, clambering over a rotten, water-logged boat, and took up our position in a small house, about a hundred yards away. We had intended to use this for our station, but an officer pointed out to us that the house was not well-situated for guarding against a stealthy approach by the enemy. So we went out into the rain, deployed in a line and dug in with our trench shovels. Long before we finished it, we were drenched to the skin. Then the trench itself began to fill with water, so that in a very short time, it was above our shoe tops. It was deathly cold. At first, I tried moving about as much as possible, to keep warm. Then I elected to stand perfectly still, like a wax mannequin, because every time my uniform touched some part of my body a new chill would run through me.

"It's like standing in a cold bath," I said to one of the men. "Aren't you cold?"

"Yes, I am," he replied. "Very cold. I hope we won't have to pass the night like this."

Quite suddenly, his wish was fulfilled. There was a burst of machine-gun fire, just ahead, and again the air was filled with the vicious song of bullets. It seemed to me that the Chinese had fired from

practically a point-blank range, yet the shots passed above our heads. I ordered the men to fix bayonets, thinking we were about to be attacked. Instantly, we forgot about our discomfort and leaned against the trench, eyes straining through the darkness. I had no sensations of cold or wet, at all. Such is the human mind.

Then the rain stopped and the insects began to chirp in the high, wet grasses. When another flurry of rain swept across the field, they stopped and, when it was gone, they began anew. It occurred to me that these insects might be very good sentries for us. Their song, I thought, would continue as long as they were not disturbed and I supposed they would surely become silent if the enemy tried to creep through the high grasses toward our position.

It was some time after midnight before we were relieved.

It was a grim pleasure to relinquish our muddy tub. We stumbled through the darkness back to the temple grounds. Many of the men were huddled in groups outside, having been unable to find room inside. Having just come from a watch, we were given somewhat special treatment. A soldier led us to a small hut, some 500 yards from the temple. By crowding together, one against the other, we

were able to get inside. It was then about two o'clock. I leaned against the wall, the bodies of the men pressing against mine on all sides, and tried to go to sleep. I was able to doze for a few moments, but in spite of my great weariness, the chill and the restless movements of the men prevented any sleep.

Thus ended the day of my debut on the field.

November 6, 1937.

The cold of the night was nothing to the paralyzing chill that beset us in the early morning when we left the hut. It was a bitter, penetrating cold, accentuated no doubt by the dampness of our clothes. We came tumbling out of our hut and ran up and down, stamping and flailing our arms in an effort to restore circulation. The weather was unchanged, gray, cloudy and cold. The bullets were unchanged. They came, in broken rhythms, singing the same malicious song. Returning to the Temple of the Maiden, we saw that we were in the midst of farming country, crisscrossed with rice paddies and dotted with groves of bamboo. There were few houses. We breakfasted on cold, lumpy rice and canned beef, and pressed close around a small fire of twigs, trying to warm ourselves.

While we were talking, Sublieutenant Katayama joined us. He said his scouting party had captured a Chinese officer during the night, discovered some important military papers in his uniform, and learned that the Chinese had been warned, in advance, of our projected landing. This was a great surprise. I would have expected a more vigorous defense of the shore, in that case, with actual hand-to-hand fighting, if necessary. Instead, the enemy had remained in concealment as we waded up the shallows and withdrew steadily as we advanced. The officer said the Chinese told him their information had been that the attack was to be made by a relatively weak Japanese unit. Finding us in such strength, perhaps, they became discouraged and retreated without making a serious contest of it.

Meanwhile, the word circulated that Norimoto's funeral was to be held immediately. His body had lain in the temple through the night. We were soon to march and the body could not be taken. I followed a group of men to a spot in the rear of the temple. There, a grave was already being dug and the body lay, covered with a canvas, on the ground near by. I went up to Imamura, an under officer, who was in charge of the burial and said, "Sir, I beg permission to have Norimoto's body cremated. We can easily carry his ashes with us."

Imamura looked thoughtful but did not reply immediately. "We can't expect much in the field," I continued, "We all realize that. Yet, our fate is likely to be the same as his. We would all prefer to have our ashes taken home rather than to become a part of the dust of this continent." I knew I was being impertinent, yet I could not do otherwise.

The officer listened gravely and then, without answering me directly, gave the order to prepare for cremation. The men all seemed relieved. A pit was dug, bridged over with interlacing branches of a tree, and the body was placed on top.

Before the fire was lighted, the men collected armloads of purple and white daisies, and completely covered poor Norimoto with them. Then the flame was set. Fujita, a first-grade private, and two others whom I did not know, began chanting a Buddhist sutra. In private life, each was a priest. We all stood, rigid, with fixed bayonets, in salute. The tears ran down my face in a stream.

In a few moments, the body was wrapped in a mantle of clean yellow flame. It twisted in the fire in a very lifelike manner. I was brimming with sorrow, shot through with a strong strain of resentment. Then came the order to march. Reluctantly, I moved away.

Does it seem strange to you that we should be

so affected by the death of one man, when in war so many must die? The only explanation is that this was our first casualty, our first stunning collision with the great mystery. We were not yet accustomed to it, not yet able to regard it without emotion, to see it as something commonplace.

So, onward. We began what was to be a long march. It led us again across the highway overlooking the bay, where our own transports and naval convoys were anchored. The water was black with small boats, skittering back and forth between the ships and the shore. Troops were coming ashore in the same launches we had used. Bigger boats were bringing in horses and gun carriages. The road was choked with troops and supplies, all the jumbled impedimenta of modern warfare.

Here, we experienced our first thrill of pride as veterans. In contrast to the troops we met, with their clean, fresh uniforms, we looked like a parade of sewer rats. Yet we were suddenly proud of our stained and dirty clothes. We had been through battle. These men had not. We were their seniors in war. They examined us closely. Some of them said, "It must have been a hard fight." Others, "Thanks for your good work." The mental comfort of this is difficult to explain. In our pride, we already began to forget the discomforts

and the dangers we had undergone in yesterday's battle.

Three miles further, the highway bent sharply to the right and brought us into a small village called Sung-lin-chen. We crossed a small bridge. Lying beside it, still gripping his bugle tightly in one hand, was the body of a young Chinese bugler. He was very young, boyish, small and delicate of build. I saluted as I passed.

The village was a deserted shambles. Obviously it had been an army headquarters, for the streets were littered with parts of uniforms, bits of torn map, and chairs and tables. The houses bore the unmistakable marks of looting. Inside, we found enemy helmets, guns, bullets. But the article that brought a cry of joy from us was nothing like these martial prizes. It was an iron kettle!

The gray clouds were breaking and patches of blue showed between them. It was noon and the warm sun was dispelling the mist. We were told we would remain in this village for several hours, so the men instantly began foraging for things to put in that iron kettle. Others started to undress, pulling fresh underwear from their kits and washing their uniforms. In a few moments, we had small resemblance to any army unit. The creek was lined

with men scraping and scrubbing and pounding. I did likewise.

My thousand-stitches belt had undergone a great transformation. From spotless white silk, it had become brown and unrecognizable, a limp rag that looked as though it had been boiled in soya sauce. The red, yellow and black stitches had faded and run together forming a dull smudge. The red embroidered charm bag that my mother had given me was the same way. Where it had lain against me, the flesh was stained with red. My feet were badly swollen and so covered with old and new blisters that I scarcely recognized them.

Almost all the men were suffering from bowel trouble, probably from drinking the dirty water from the creeks and standing in the chill rain. We all hastily swallowed some pills, which were supposed to be good for this disorder. Finally, lunch was announced and we fell to, like vultures. The big iron kettle was filled to the brim with chicken and vegetables and there was freshly steamed rice. No fine banquet, no matter how sumptuous, will live in my memory as long as that meal.

Afterward, I wandered through the village and finally entered a small building, ringed with a bamboo fence. It must have been a school, originally,

then later occupied by some army staff. Books were scattered about and a great many army hats with the Nationalist Government symbol, the white star on a blue field. And there were more maps and books and collections of war songs sticking in the desks. It was easy to see what these Chinese children had been given to study, how assiduously they were being trained in nationalism and hatred for Japan.

Dr. Sun Yat-sen's book, *The Three Principles of the People*, was in every desk. Here was a textbook on *Social Welfare*. There was a *History of Great China*. I found a map of Manchukuo, entitled, "The Map of National Disgrace". It treated this territory as part of China.

Now I am going to finish this long letter. I am lying on my stomach, my back bare to the warm sunlight. In the distance, the hum of airplane motors mingles with the throb of heavy artillery. We have been told that the battle has just begun. Our most serious losses were sustained by the Shiki party, which was surrounded on three sides as it waded ashore. Men were shot down, at almost point-blank range, before they ever emerged from the shallows. They say our men tied themselves to the bodies of their comrades to keep them from floating away. A naval landing party has collected all of these. I knew the men of this unit and I

wonder, now, which of them are dead and which are still alive. Fortunately, our main force reached shore without serious difficulty.

We march at four and I hope to sleep a little before that. So good-by. I hope you can read my scrawly writing.

November 9, 1937  
At Feng-cheng-chen.

Dear Brother:

I am writing this in a Chinese house, against which bullets are striking in an even, regular cadence. Fortunately, the walls are thick enough so that we are all quite safe. One candle lights my page. All the men are asleep, except one private and myself. He is recording the events of the past day in his diary. Most of us have been very meticulous about keeping up our diaries. No matter how tired the men are, they write down what has happened and how they felt, before they go to sleep. I suppose that is because life seems unusually sweet to us and the events of each day, however commonplace, appear to be very much worth putting on paper. We never know what tomorrow may bring, so we relive today in our diaries.

Nakagawa, the other man who is awake, has just glanced at me and I said, "You'd better get some sleep. We probably will have some fighting tomorrow." He smiled and replied, "And you too, Mr. Squad Commander." Before I close my eyes, I want to tell you about the last three days.

I will remember them as long as I live, not because they contained much action or high adventure, but because they have been as full of pain and discomfort as any I ever hope to know again. The story is merely one of marching, of mud, rain, blisters, weariness, a good deal of danger, and a little blood.

We resumed march at four in the afternoon of the sixth, passing out into the rice paddies, which were slushy from the rain and from the churning feet of the company that preceded us. Each step was an effort. Either we slipped and fell, or stuck in the mud up to our ankles. After a time, the road seemed to take on an actively malicious personality. We cursed it as though it were alive. China's mucilaginous mud is China's great ally.

And then our packs began to chafe. They seemed to gain weight with every step we took. At first, we bore them bravely, sticking daisies in them, like the ancient Samurai.<sup>4</sup> But either the Samurai were

<sup>4</sup> Japanese knights of the feudal era—Translator.

stronger than we, or else their armor was not as heavy as our outfit, for the packs became a real torture before we had gone very far. There was gunpowder in our knapsacks. With all the other things we were carrying, it made a heavy load. The straps soon began to bite into my shoulders. We drank until our canteens were empty and everyone was drenched with sweat.

So it went, over mile after mile of this sea of mud, through rice fields, mulberry groves, past scattered villages. Gradually, I became too weary to talk. Some of our more vigorous men chattered unceasingly among themselves and occasionally addressed a remark to me. This annoyed me, for I did not want to talk. We halted regularly, flopping to the earth in mud or water, wherever we happened to be when the order was given.

Once, we halted on the bank of one of those many small, sluggish creeks that thread this country. The water was muddy. Ordinarily, we would not have drunk it without putting into it one of the antiseptic tablets. But now I was too weary to take the drug from my pack. I just rolled over and dipped my hot face in the water and drank. I had been sick, once before, and evacuated blood. But not even the fear of this could overcome my weariness now.

The day wore along. Before many more hours, we decided to throw away everything in our packs except the two essentials—the gunpowder and the bullets. We abandoned them in a field, which was soon marked with a regular mound of rice, biscuits, canned food, old shirts, and so on. It began to grow dark. Far ahead of us, as scouts, we could see some of our own men. Occasionally, a bullet whizzed out of nowhere, fired by an unseen enemy at men who were too tired even to notice it.

Then it began to rain; a fine, light drizzle which made the bad road worse. Here and there, we passed native huts, wrapped in flames. After an eternity of shambling through muck and sludge, we entered a small village and the day's march was ended.

Men from other squads and companies were already crowding into the abandoned houses. We entered one assigned to us. After posting a sentry, we dropped, exhausted, on the floor. It was pitch-dark, no fires being permitted. But after a few moments, I switched on my pocket flash and ran it over the room in which we were lying. The only thing of note were the slogans on the walls, written in white chalk, "Down with Japanese Imperialism," "Good Men For Soldiers," "To Bear Arms Is An Honor," "Drive Out The Japanese," and so on.

Fatigue soon gave way to hunger. The private, Kai, went out into the street and soon came back with the news that there was a Chinese woman, near by, who kept a shop filled with food and sweet meats. He described canned strawberries, apricots, and said he had seen candies and tobacco. "And she doesn't want any money," he said. I went out with him, but he was unable to find his way back to the shop in the darkness. After a few moments of fruitless wandering, we returned to our house.

However, we did find a bottle of perfume called "Flower Dew". A moment later, no two other soldiers in all of China smelled as sweetly as we did. Of course, our appearance was hardly of the best, what with the mud and sweat and rain that stained our uniforms. But our aroma could not be questioned.

But in the house, the men were beginning to recover from weariness. One, Hayase, had gone poking upstairs for what he soberly called "some domiciliary research". He called down, in a moment, saying he had found a large and well-equipped kitchen, stocked with rice and water. "That means a hot breakfast tomorrow," he laughed.

*November 7, 1937.*

It was still dark when we fell into line and started the day's march. The rain was falling more heavily. Worst of all, Hayase's dream of a hot breakfast, to which we all subscribed, did not come true. Through some dislocation of arrangements, we did not have time to eat. We munched cold rice as we marched. During the first hour, our detachment lost its way in the dark and we had to retrace our steps. When you have so far to walk, and this with blisters on your feet, every added step is a minor tragedy. So I leave our feelings to your imagination. Again my shoulders ached from the pack straps and a chill wind began blowing the rain through my uniform to the clammy flesh beneath.

As the hours passed, man after man began to fall out of line. This is no great disgrace and under these conditions it was not as dangerous as it might have been. Sometimes, it is certain death for stragglers, but apparently this area through which we were marching had been almost entirely cleared of Chinese. I myself began to feel weak and dizzy as the unbelievable task of walking continued to present itself. I swallowed my lunch long before noon to ward off the faintness I felt.

It was a bad day for the infantry, but even worse for the wagon corps. Time after time, we met these

units, wagons, horses, and even men wallowing in the mud. The road had been cut to pieces by the heavy wheels and the churning of many feet. At best, it was probably never very good and now, after several days of rain and heavy traffic, it was a morass.

Many of the horses fell and did not rise again; exhausted, I suppose, from overstrain. Some seemed to stare at us in mute supplication. I could not help but think of Kichizo, the horse I told you about in one of my letters. I hated to think that he might have met the same fate.

Gradually, it became impossible to maintain the schedule that had been set for us—so many minutes of marching and then an interval of rest. We began taking rest periods more and more frequently. Two other corporals in our section fell out and, so strange are the ways of men, this was an encouragement to me. Ordinarily, they are much stronger than I. Hence, the sight of their failure was a stimulus to me. I plodded onward like a robot. I saw nothing of the scenery around me. My eyes were riveted on the ground in front of me, a narrow circle of vision into which my feet—left . . . right . . . left . . . right—continually intruded. My mind seemed to float somewhere outside, divorced entirely from my body.

When it seemed impossible to go any further, the noon rest period—two whole hours!—finally

came. We entered a native hut, built a fire and slumped numbly to the earthen floor. Just to lie there, inert, not a muscle moving was an ecstasy I cannot put into words. I felt a faint glow of satisfaction in the knowledge that not one of the men in my squad had fallen out. Some of them actually seemed to have retained a degree of strength and freshness, for they were soon on their feet again, searching for the inevitable chicken for lunch. And, inevitably, they found it, a tough, stringy old hen that tasted like the rarest squab to us. Food, warmth, and rest gradually brought the strength coursing through our veins again. We were actually cheerful when the detachment commander, Arakawa, approached and said, encouragingly, "It's a terrible march but it will be worth it. We're joining a surprise attack at a point where the Chinese will never expect us. Stick it out a while longer."

The afternoon was a repetition of the morning, only worse, because weariness overtook us more quickly. The road disappeared entirely in this sea of mud and we branched off into pathless fields, following a line of telegraph poles that we knew would lead us to the village where we were to camp that night. It was no great tragedy, losing the road, for the fields could hardly be less passable than the road. The darkness came very early; first

it was a misty gray and then complete black. We began to fall more frequently, a result both of muscle weariness and our inability to see clearly. Sometimes, scrambling up the bank of some small creek, we were on all fours, like animals. Personally, when I felt a slope, indicating a creek or ditch to cross, I simply sat down and slid until I stopped. It saved many steps, but it plastered several pounds of mud on me that I could ill-afford to carry. Once, during one of these short joy rides, my gun caught in the mud and the stock struck me a violent blow in the neck.

I cautioned the men to stay close together, for in the darkness and the tortuous terrain, it would have been easy for someone to get lost. Again, the squad came through intact.

It was eleven o'clock at night before we came to Ting-lin-chen, the village for which we had set out in the morning. The usual scene was duplicated—a few moments prone upon the ground, in mud, in puddles, wherever a man happened to be when the fall-out order was given . . . then a search for a house, a fire, and so on. The men broke up chairs and furniture in the house we entered for fuel. In the leaping flames, we saw each other and there were roars of violent laughter. The mud had smeared us, uniforms, hands, faces, helmets, with so similar

a color and texture that we looked like big clay dolls. Except for our eyes, we resembled nothing human. We took bayonets and actually scraped the earth of China from us in huge slabs.

"Our squad leader slipped and fell all day long," somebody said.

"I saw you go down five times while I was falling once," another added. "Just think, if I fell twice you fell ten times, and then three times for me and fifteen times for you, and so on. Let's practice our arithmetic. What was the total for you if it was thirty-nine times for me?"

"I've heard," said another, "that in some squads, the squad leader and every man jack of them fell out of line today."

"Not in ours, though," said the first.

"We have by far the best record," was the reply, "that's so, isn't it, Commander?" looking at me. I could only nod and smile.

This time, we apparently had taken quarters in the former home of a lawyer or some sort of student. There were great piles of law books on the tables in one room. The former occupant's stationery bore the legend, "National Anti-Japanese Headquarters," and the picture of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Beside it, in smaller characters, were the words, "The Revolution is not yet complete. Fight on!"

We had a hot dinner. Only Naito, the machine gunner, was unable to eat. His was the hardest task in our squad, for he had to carry his gun and it was much heavier than our rifles.

We went to sleep with the wind moaning dismally through the glassless windows. The men took turns at sentry duty. In the distance, we could hear the muffled thunder of heavy guns.

November 8, 1937.

On this day, I succumbed to the fate that I had so long fought against. I was forced to drop out of line. There was no unusual reason for it. I merely was unable to keep going. My feet were raw, a mass of broken blisters. My injured neck hurt. It seemed to me that there was a great stone pressing against my chest. It was purely a matter of cumulative fatigue. A part of the weariness of each preceding day remains when the new day's march begins. Finally, one is as tired as though he had never slept at all. Thus it was with me. Sakagami stayed behind with me. Contrary to what I had imagined, I did not feel disgraced as the column passed me by. I felt nothing but an overwhelming desire to rest.

Ahead of me, on the road, a battery of light artillery was waging a terrible battle with the glu-

tinous mud. The wheels of the gun carriages were deep in it. Then the horses would slip, stagger and fall. The men would grasp the wheel spokes and heave, with the result that their own legs would disappear, up to the knees. Finally, with a tremendous effort, the carriage would lurch ahead a few feet, but seldom very far. This heartbreakening action was repeated over and over again. It again seemed to me that the mud had become a living thing. I had the queer sensation that it was biting the legs of men and horses, and reaching upward with short sturdy arms to clutch the carriage wheels. Finally, the artillerymen disassembled the guns and began to carry or drag them, piece by piece, to firmer ground. One of them told us that the unit had lost great numbers of horses, in this manner, on the preceding day.

I sat and watched the procession flowing past me. Artillery and infantry and then more artillery. It was a magnificent sight. Even though they were caked with mud, almost unrecognizable beneath the sticky yellow mantle, they looked glorious to me. I knew that each was undergoing torture, just as I had been. Their feet, like mine, were a raw and bloody mass. Their shoulders ached and each breath was an effort. Yet they went on, group after group, grimly and without complaint. Indeed, I thought,

this impulse to be a part of a great mass movement is a noble thing. Individual hardship is submerged in a spirit of sacrifice for the whole. Thinking thus, I regained my own strength and rejoined the column.

A little while later, Sakagami and I stopped again to eat our lunches. Suddenly, a Chinese boy ran up to us, carrying a teapot in one hand and two cups in the other. He scampered up to us, like a muddy little rabbit, and thrust the cups and teapot into our laps. I took some money from my pocket and held it out to him, but he shook his head, "Pu-yao, pu-yao," ("I don't want it.") Twice, he came back to us, took the teapot and refilled it with hot water, each time refusing our money. It was not the first time Chinese country people have been kind to us.

By this time, the sun had emerged from behind greasy gray clouds. It grew warmer and gradually the walking became easier. Life, in every way, seemed much brighter than it had been two hours before. And now I began to be impatient to rejoin my company. Sakagami and I quickened our pace, and began passing the slow-moving column, trying to make up for lost time.

Finally, a soldier who saw our numbers, said, "What's your hurry? Your outfit is back there a way?" He motioned behind him. We kept right on.

"That's very strange," I remarked.

"He must be mistaken," said Sakagami. "How could we have gone ahead of them, without seeing them?"

Nevertheless, we asked several other men and received the same answer. I decided that something must have delayed the company, but, although I was anxious to rejoin them, I did not feel like walking back and then having to retrace my steps. I still felt weak and was afraid I might again have to fall out of line.

In a few moments, thanks to Sakagami's sharp eyes, fortune again smiled on us. He suddenly handed me his gun and sprinted across the field, behind a clump of trees, and came out leading a young ox. He was grinning from ear to ear.

"We're going to travel in style," he said. "Here's a porter to carry our luggage."

So saying, he took my pack and his own and slung them over the ox's back. It kicked and bucked around, but we held it. "Here is a piece of booty no less valuable," Sakagami then said. And he held up a chicken. It would be interesting to know the distance that the Japanese army was able to travel, thanks to Chinese chickens.

We had hardly started before we heard the reason for the delay in our unit. A soldier told us

one of the men had been hit by a bullet from some sniper, concealed at the side of the road.

"Who was it?"

"I don't know," he said, "somebody in your squad, I understand."

Immediately, Sakagami and I turned around and began hurrying toward the rear. Both of us were consumed with impatience to know the details of the situation. At last, we met Sublieutenant Yamazaki. Behind him I saw the faces of some of my men.

"What happened?" I asked.

The officer told me that Takahashi had been wounded in the thigh, but not seriously. The bullet passed right through him, he said.

"We were eating lunch when it happened," Yamazaki said. "All of a sudden, we heard a shot, off to the right of us, and a bullet whanged very close. Takahashi, himself, said, 'Is anybody hurt?' He must have been stunned, momentarily. Then he fell over." The sublieutenant added, grimly, "We found the Chinese who did it."

He said that Naito, the machine gunner, had also been put on the sick list, collapsing shortly before noon. An ambulance corps was caring for them, he said.

As we moved on, the private, Kai, told me more.

"Naito has something the matter with his stomach. He couldn't keep up any longer. We were all worried about you, too. When you left us, this morning, you must have taken our good luck with you."

We walked on for about a mile and came to a village where, I was told, the medical corps would make its headquarters for the night. The main body was going ahead to the larger city of Chin-shan. Since we had two casualties, I was ordered to stay here and see to it that Naito and Takahashi were safely brought in.

I dropped my pack and started back down the line with Sakagami. We saw a good many Chinese lining the road, each with a Japanese flag in his hand. Not all of them had the look of farmers. I suppose many were ex-soldiers who had thrown away their uniforms, and some probably were plain-clothes men and spies. Nevertheless, I went up to one group and wrote, in Chinese characters, "We want to hire four men as stretcher-bearers." Neither Sakagami nor I could speak Chinese, but the natives seemed to be able to read what we had written and four of them signified their willingness to follow us. Sakagami glanced at me, as we prepared to start.

"You're not looking well, again," he said. "You stay here and I'll soon be along with the others."

He was right. My weakness had again overcome me and I could not have continued much further. So I sat down on the bank of a stream and gazed idly at the sky. It was nearly two hours later when I saw, coming up the road, the four Chinese carrying two stretchers. I rose to my feet and went toward them. One of the men bent over a stretcher and said, "Here comes your squad commander, Takahashi."

Takahashi raised his head and looked toward me. He grinned, in a way, and said, "Mr. Commander, I'm terribly, terribly sorry."

"That's all right," I said. "It's not your fault."

His eyes filled with tears and he hauled the blanket over his head, mumbling, "I'm sorry I've been wounded."

I then went over to where Naito was lying and asked him how he felt, but he did not answer. He appeared to have fallen into a deep sleep. His face was pale and pinched, so that I hardly would have recognized him.

When we came to the village where the medical corps had stationed itself, Takahashi was feeling better. He seemed positively pleased with himself. "I heard something whizz near me," he said, "and I looked around to see if anyone had been hit. Then I felt a pain in my leg and realized that it

was I who was wounded. I fell over. It's absolutely ridiculous! Disgusting little accident!" And he began to laugh. Then, in a more serious voice, he began to plead not to be left behind. "In ten days or so, I ought to be all right. You'll see what you can do about it, won't you?" I gripped his hand and nodded.

Dusk was approaching before the whole ambulance unit came up. I wanted to see that Naito and Takahashi were safely hospitalized before starting toward Chin-shan. The sun was down and night was beginning to fall before this was accomplished. I had not realized how many casualties we had suffered. The ambulances were filled with wounded men and those who had fallen ill. A driver told me that Chinese stragglers harried them all the way from the rear. As soon as the main force had passed, snipers and sharpshooters, concealed in ambush, would open fire on any small groups of the army.

"When they saw ambulances, they came right out in the open," he said. "They knew there was nothing much to fear from us. So they let us have it. That happened several times today. This region is full of them."

"Then there may be a night attack," I said.

"Maybe so," he said. "They know we're not very strong. It's more likely, though, that they'll

just wait alongside of the road for us again tomorrow."

"I'm taking my squad on through to Chin-shan tonight," I said.

He shook his head, "Well, good luck."

I soon discovered that he was not exaggerating the danger. When darkness finally was complete, some of the men built fires, intending to prepare food. Instantly, an officer ran out of one of the huts yelling,

"Douse those fires. You'll have every guerrilla in a hundred miles taking pot shots at us. The forest is thick with them."

So out went the fires and we were swallowed up in blackness. Overhead, the blue-black sky glittered with stars and there was a thin crescent moon off to our left.

Meanwhile, a nurse told me the field hospital was ready and I hurried over to get places for my two casualties. The dressing station was set up in a fairly large house. They had covered the floor with straw and spread blankets on top of it. Fifty or more men were already there, lying close together. The air was already heavy with the peculiar smell of blood and a strong tang of antiseptic. Everywhere, I saw the thick red blood oozing through snow-white bandages. The wounded bore it all very

patiently. Pain and determination mingled touchingly in their faces. I saw to it that Naito and Takahashi were safely placed and then, bidding them a brief farewell, I hurried outside into the fresh, clean air.

The rest of the squad was waiting and we set out at once in the direction of Chin-shan. We were hardly past the outskirts of the village when a voice sounded in the darkness, "Hey, get down, you fellows. There are snipers just across the way." We went over in the direction of the speaker and found a detachment digging a shallow trench beside the road. They were the covering force for the medical corps. A big man with a long black moustache was in command.

"We're heading for Chin-shan," I told him.

"I wouldn't if I were you," he said. "You've got about ten miles of walking, mostly through wooded country. It's infested with guerrillas."

I explained that we had fallen behind, due to the two casualties, and said we were anxious to get back with our own outfit.

"If that's the case, why don't you wait for some other unit and go up with them," he suggested. "I understand there's a company due through pretty soon."

"I suppose that's best," I said. So we sat down

to wait. After an hour or more, a signal corps came up, with a detachment of infantry. I explained our position to the commander and asked him to let us go with them.

"Glad to have you," he said. "We can use some extra protection in the rear. Follow along."

They started off, at a snail's pace. Such caution seemed unnecessary, for there was not a sound in the night air around us. Not a bush stirred. This officer was a stickler for rules. He even had scouts ahead of the main force, with whom he was in constant touch. We were protecting the rear. From time to time, a runner would come back to ask us if we noticed anything and then disappear, to report, I suppose, to the commander.

All in all, it was the most pleasant march we had had. The night was cool and fresh. The road was fairly good and the pace was slow. We passed innumerable creeks and streams, which seemed inlaid with diamonds as they reflected the stars.

Then, without warning, the semidarkness was rent by a blazing red light that appeared above the treetops at some distance to our right. Instantly, the whole party halted and took shelter, expecting attack. But there was not a sound. We waited and waited. Still nothing. So we resumed our careful advance. We went about a thousand yards further

and suddenly the light blazed again, vivid and bloody red. It was a rocket or some kind of flare. As we marched, the lights marched with us. Their pace was set against our own. It gave us an eerie sensation to realize that the enemy, silent and invisible, was moving beside us through the woods, stealthy, dangerous, waiting—but for what? Instead of making me feel safer, the infinitely slow pace finally began to get on my nerves. It seemed to me that the sooner we reached Chin-shan, the better. The Chinese knew where we were. If they were going to attack, they would have done so by this time. So the best thing was to hurry onward.

At last, as we topped a rise in the road, we could see, far ahead, a number of fires blazing. I went up to the commander.

"I think that's Chin-shan," he said. "The country here seems to check with what shows on the map." We looked at it together. It pictured the road running straight, with creeks on either side, and heavy woods all around. No other village was marked as lying between the one we had left and Chin-shan. I asked how far he thought it was, yet, to Chin-shan.

"Hard to say," he said. "You can see those fires a long way at night."

"Unless you need us," I said, "I think we'll go on ahead. We've been absent from our outfit all

day and the men are anxious to get some sleep." He agreed. I thanked him and ordered my squad to the van.

We fixed our bayonets and fell into single file, with plenty of space between each man. I marched first. We stepped up our pace to normal marching speed and soon outstripped the slow-moving group. In a short while, we passed their scouts. The strange, flashing lights continued to explode, from time to time, on our right. The darkness seemed darker and the silence more ominous. I half questioned my own wisdom in having gone on ahead, but we continued. The road was straight and above the trees we could see a faint glow from the fires of what we supposed was Chin-shan. It was very heartening.

An hour passed. Our bayonets gleamed coldly in the steely light of the moon and stars. I felt the muscles in my hands aching and suddenly realized that I had been squeezing my rifle with a terrible grip. No one spoke. There was only the sound of our heavy shoes, scraping and scuffling, and the half-audible voices of the forest around us. More time passed and the thought flashed through my head that perhaps, somewhere, the road had branched and we had missed Chin-shan. I understood it to be a city of some size, so that it would

be impossible to miss. Yet, I thought, it must be equally impossible that I could have lost my way. I peered ahead, straining to pierce the blackness of night and forest, but could not even see the glow of the fires that had lured us on.

Suddenly, my shoes struck wood, and there was a hollow sound underneath. Obviously, I was on some kind of bridge or culvert. I halted and looked around me. It was a bridge, but there was no mere creek underneath. Instead, what appeared to be a fairly large stream was running. Up ahead, I could just make out the blacker smudge of houses in the blackness. It was a village, but silent and deserted. At any rate, it was shelter and I supposed some of our men would be quartered here and able to tell me where we were. I broke into a half-run.

My next sensation was of a wire clutching against my knees. Instantly, there was a rattling and clanging like a blacksmith's forge. A voice cried, "Who goes there?" I instantly replied, "Friends." A sentry, with fixed bayonet, came up cautiously. My own men, by this time, had come up. We saw a machine gun's ugly little snout pointing directly at us and a number of other sentries manning it. They were our own troops.

"What in hell did I run into?" I asked. They all

laughed, and showed me the homemade burglar alarm they had rigged. A wire was stretched across the bridge and attached, on either side, to a cluster of tin cans and oil drums, delicately balanced. If anything touched the wire, it sent the cans tumbling and made noise enough to wake up the countryside for a mile around.

"It's a neat trick," I said, "but it makes you feel pretty foolish." I asked these men if this was not Chin-shan and received the discouraging information that the city was still some distance ahead. The sentries advised us against going on, but having come this far, we were determined. So we passed through this village and again were in the midst of the forest.

Now came real difficulty. The road, which had been broad and well-marked, narrowed to little more than a wagon path, and twisted and turned through the trees. I realized, after a while, that there was a very real danger of losing the way and being caught, out there, by guerrillas. So, despite my bitter disappointment, I determined to turn back.

It was just midnight when we re-entered the village. I found the headquarters of the Fujiyama unit and began banging on the door. A gruff voice

bawled out, hoarsely, "Well, what is it?" I explained to this officer what had happened and he came to the door, rubbing his eyes.

"You're lucky to be alive, at all," he said. "The area between here and Chin-shan is lousy with guerrillas. Every outfit that went in had to fight its way through and some of them had a pretty hot time of it. I wonder they didn't catch you."

"Then, there's no chance of us getting into Chin-shan tonight?" I asked.

"Not a chance in the world for anything less than a full company," he replied. "You bed down here and catch up with your unit in the morning." He turned and called an orderly and gave instructions where to put us. "Have you had anything to eat?" he asked.

I said we had not, so he told the orderly to bring in rice and canned food. "You won't find that your quarters are exactly a hotel," he said, "but I suppose you won't mind."

Tired, as I was, I could not refrain from smiling as he spoke. He was so typical of our officers, gruff but kind. He told us his unit was moving out at five o'clock and to be ready then. With a brief "Good night," he closed the door.

It was a shabby, dirty room, with straw on the floor. The men lit a fire beneath a kettle the orderly

brought in and we had a midnight supper of rice, cooked in reddish-colored water, and canned food. Then, we lay down and, almost at once, we were asleep.

November 9, 1937.

I awoke at dawn, stiff and sore, and with the usual complement of blisters on my feet. But, in spite of them, I felt stronger than I had been in a long time. I went outside, to the place where the troop was forming and, to my extreme surprise, found our own company among them. It had camped in the village the night before and had never reached Chin-shan. The march started.

When I saw, in full daylight, the forest and the twisting path that we had tried to follow the night before, I murmured fervent thanks to whatever impelled me to turn back. There were a thousand places, at every step, where we might have lost the way. And now we could see what had been invisible to us the night before—piles of enemy corpses. Obviously, every inch of the way, here, had been contested. Bodies were on the ground and in the swamp and slumped, in lifelike postures, beside the trees. It was a ghastly scene and better met in daylight than in the dark.

Now, the weather had changed from raw cold to oppressive heat. The sun, for which we had longed on preceding days, was too much in evidence. Perspiration rolled down my shirt in streams and, as usual, my canteen was soon empty. Within an hour, we were in and beyond Chin-shan. Many more Chinese bodies were strewn around, here.

The morning wore along. The pains of marching increased. I set my teeth and tried to concentrate all my energy to the task of continuing. I determined not to drop out of line a second time. My strength was ebbing and then a fortunate thing occurred. It will seem strange to hear it described as "fortunate". Fighting started up ahead.

There was a roll of rifle fire across the fields and through the woods. Apparently, the vanguard had collided with an enemy of considerable size. The column of march stopped and we all deployed on the sides of the road. It was a double relief. There was no more marching, for the time being, and, besides, the appearance of actual fighting instantly expelled, from my mind, all thoughts of my own misery. In a twinkling, I forgot it completely.

From what I could hear, our center seemed to have come under very heavy fire. I caught the staccato bark of the machine guns now, between the steady crackle of the rifles. The air was filled with

the smell of exploding guns. Then the order came down, "Artillery, forward!" It was passed rapidly down the line, toward the rear. A few moments later, a heavy fieldpiece was wheeled into line, shrouded with dust kicked up by the horses that drew it. Quickly, with deft, sure movements, the batterymen brought the gun into action. A deafening roar split the air around us and, in a few seconds, there was an answering roar up ahead, as the shell burst. It fired steadily.

Meanwhile, three of our airplanes appeared overhead and we were treated to the usual spectacle that always excites the envy and admiration of an infantryman. The planes wheeled in slow, lazy circles above us. Apparently spotting a target, they suddenly released their bomb racks and some dark objects hurtled toward the earth. They looked to me like beer bottles. Again, the ground trembled with a series of thunderous explosions, and a fountain of earth and smoke rose leisurely toward the sky.

Then the command came down, "Medical corps, forward." Someone said the company commander had been hit. Stretcher-bearers rushed ahead, recklessly. Returning, they told us that the enemy was resisting fiercely and that a number of our men had been hit.

At noontime, we ate lunch, crouching behind the trees, or behind the banks of a creek, chatting and smoking as carelessly as though the nearest bullet were miles away. I actually dozed for a while after lunch, undisturbed by the thunders of the fighting around me. It seemed good just to lie there in the sun, looking upward at a white cloud floating through the sky. Even the whine of the bullets seemed vaguely friendly. I glanced around me and saw men asleep, everywhere, like fish drying on the beach at home. Yet, there was a sizeable battle being fought, just up ahead.

Gradually, the Chinese began to withdraw and the sound of fighting grew more distant. They fought hard and with some success for a while, and then, for no apparent reason, started a retreat. They frequently do this, so I hear, but no one knows why. We entered the village where I am writing this in the late afternoon. I had nothing else to do, so I spent the time polishing my bayonet and oiling my rifle. Bullets are still flying, but the battle, like a tropical storm, has rolled away as swiftly as it appeared.

I am told our van fought a group of about 1,000 Chinese, who had taken a strong position, squarely across our path. Behind them was another force that did not take part in the action. The former

detachment of Chinese had two fieldpieces and several large machine guns. The story is that they would have retreated earlier, except for the troops back of them who were detailed to watch them and shoot down their own men, if a retreat started. Hence, the first line of Chinese held out until the shadows of late afternoon began to lengthen. Then, as soon as the "guards" behind could no longer see them clearly, they slipped away, scurrying through the forest, around the flanks of the other group. They left several hundred dead and wounded behind them. It is a strange war. For the Chinese, it must be difficult to tell friend from enemy.

So this is the diary of my last three days. The positions ahead, according to report, are strongly fortified. We have been warned to expect a series of heavy engagements. I am going to close now and, with the lullaby of bullets, go to sleep.

November 15, 1937

At Kiashan, China.

Dear Brother:

By the grace of good luck, I am still alive after a number of very bad days in the field. Death has been a constant companion since I last wrote you. Perhaps because of this, we are all very excited to-

night about something that must seem to you to be very simple and childish. What is it? We are going to have a hot bath!

The men are acting like kids. Well, to us, it is a thrill, a very great one. It shows you to what a minimum our pleasures have been reduced. It came about in this way—One of the men found a huge jar out in the field, full of old beans. We dug a hole outside one of the houses, fitted the jar into it and now we have a splendid outdoor bath. The joy of living, now, is contained merely in being alive. We find a keen, almost painful joy in the appreciation of things that formerly had little meaning, the animal pleasures of cooking and eating, bathing, washing our clothes, the feel of the sun, the sweet, fresh air. These are luxuries.

And now, here is the diary of the past few days:

November 10, 1937.

The march began early, on a winding path through the fields. My company was attached to a unit that proceeded to the left of the main force, protecting the flanks. The country was much the same as I have described before, the same rice paddies, crisscrossed with creeks and streams, and dotted with mulberry trees and clumps of bamboo. It was not an easy march, but at least we were not

plagued by the mud that proved such a great trial to us, before.

The high spot of the day was the discovery of an orange tree, heavy with fruit. For a few moments, it caused complete confusion in our ranks, as the men broke out of line and began trying to bring down the fruit with bamboo poles. Then, Hayase, of my squad, suddenly shinnied up the tree like a monkey. Instantly, men from other squads followed suit and a regular competition began. None of us got very many oranges, but even a few pieces seemed delicious. It seemed to me that I had never tasted anything quite so good. All our senses have been sharpened amazingly.

Towards evening, we caught sight of the Shanghai-Hangchow-Ningpo railway, a straight line piercing the slanting creeks. It made a nice geometrical pattern. We advanced along the railroad, heading westward. Both sides were blazing with flowers, crimson and white cosmos, and wild daisies.

Then, for no reason that we knew, the order came for us to halt and take cover. It was supremely quiet. We slipped down the slope of a ditch and leaned against the side. The sun had set and the sky was becoming cloudy. It was growing cold. Yet, some of the men instantly fell asleep. The others were shivering from the chill.

Corporal Uehara, one of the squad leaders, kept up an incessant fire of chatter all the time. "You know," he said, "we were a part of some very unusual strategy during these last few days. The landing at Hangchow Bay brought a quick and advantageous development in the Shanghai battle. We appeared in their rear, thus threatening to trap them. They have been forced to retreat. I understand Chiang Kai-shek has withdrawn to Kiashan, for a final stand. The battle, there, is going to be a decisive one. If Kiashan falls into our hands, the Chinese Government will surrender at once."

"Why, you're a regular staff officer," I said, jokingly.

He smiled, bashfully, and whispered, "I'm just talking like this to keep my squad from going to sleep. I don't want them to catch cold."

Before we could say more, we were ordered to withdraw along the same road we had just come. The reason was that our vanguard had discovered the railroad to be heavily defended by pillboxes. Up ahead, they were clustered across the path of our advance. There was no necessity to attack them from the front, which would have been a very costly operation. We were returning to come upon them from the sides and rear. We marched a long time, growing colder and weaker with every step.

Once, during a halt, we heard the sound of heavy guns far in the distance. Then a trumpet called, with a queer, mournful voice. There was another burst of gunfire and then more bugling. In the darkness, someone said, "That sounds like the signal for a truce."

"It may be so," said another voice.

"Listen," interrupted a third, "there is no more firing. Perhaps it's all over."

A moment later, the rattle of machine guns ended all this hopeful speculation.

We moved along for another thousand yards or so and eventually found ourselves in a hollow beside the road. Presently, the order came along to spend the rest of the night here. It was bitterly cold. The ground was icy. We spread tent cloths and lay down, huddling close together. I pulled my overcoat over me and began chewing a piece of dried fish. The moon was a shining mirror in the clear autumn sky. The stars glittered like diamonds. How peaceful it seemed. The spectacle of this beauty drew my mind away from my feelings of cold and hunger. A sentry patrolled, with light footsteps, near my pillow, his bayonet glittering coldly in the light of the moon. What am I doing here? I thought. And thinking thus, I fell asleep.

November 11, 1937.

I was awakened by the bustle of men moving all around me. It was still dark and still very cold. In the dim light of dawn, the water in the creeks looked gray. I did not have time to fold my overcoat properly, but just tucked it in around my knapsack. We marched for a short distance and then halted in another hollow spot beside the road.

As I have told you before, we seldom are aware of the exact meaning of our movements, much less our specific part in this maneuvering and fighting. We get our orders and we follow them, but what the reason is, we rarely know. On this day, the march began at dawn, but took us only a short distance before we again halted, stopping for the rest of the day. We were under fire, throughout the day, from machine guns stationed in the pillboxes dotting the country all around us. Bullets seemed to be coming from every direction.

Some four hundred yards ahead of us, an engineering corps was having an even more unpleasant time, however. The Chinese had destroyed a bridge and the engineers, working in a regular blizzard of bullets, were trying to repair it. Of course, a Japanese covering force was protecting them from actual at-

tack, but it could not protect them from the stream of lead that poured incessantly into their ranks. The engineers were marvelous. For logs to span the gap in the bridge, they were chopping down telephone poles, one by one, along the road. As soon as a pole was ready, two men would take each end. Then, they ran like madmen straight into the teeth of that storm and tried to fit the lumber into place. I saw two of them shot down almost at the instant that they reached their goal. The work progressed slowly, but they worked steadily, almost as though they did not realize their danger.

Waiting, we grew fearfully hungry. Of course, the commissary was far behind us, its heavy wagons unquestionably mired in the almost impassable roads I have told you about. Our advance had been too rapid for them. We had not received a grain of rice since the day we landed. We had been lucky in our efforts to forage, however, and had found not only rice but chickens and some pork and vegetables in and around the villages. But, in a spot like the one we now found ourselves, there was no chance for any of this.

This was not unexpected and we tried to reduce the amount used to almost half the ordinary ration. Finally, it was all consumed. I began to miss the

rice we had thrown away in the field, some days before. At that time, it seemed that the weight would crush us. Now, we would gladly have borne it. Some of the men were fortunate in being able to sleep while we waited.

The restless ones finally brought word that we were starving in the midst of plenty. The field all around us had been planted with sweet potatoes. What a situation! Stay behind the shelter of the banks, and Chinese bullets could not reach you. But hunger could. There, so near and yet so dangerously far, was food. All you needed was the courage to jump out into the open. Death for a potato was not our idea of the "honorable death" so we contented ourselves with stretching our arms as far as possible and eating only what we could reach. There was a creek near by, and we brought water from it and boiled the potatoes in our tin boxes. Dipping a can into the water, I saw it was filled with tiny, arrow-shaped killifish. Suddenly, a bullet spattered in among them, "plunk", and they all scattered, but reformed their ranks, immediately, and swam around in regular military formation.

Watching these little creatures, I quite forgot about the war. It was a peaceful little scene, far removed from bullets and fighting. But reality came back with brutal suddenness. Returning with the

water, I learned that another dispatch rider in our section, Private Tanimura, had been killed.

I had seen him a moment before, lolling in the sun, chattering with one of the men, and chewing some tough salt beans. The next instant, he raised himself to carry a message to some other unit and a bullet struck him. It was as though it had been waiting there, just a few inches away. He fell heavily and rolled down the slope. Another man picked him up and ripped open the buttons of his shirt. An army nurse quickly examined him and found a gaping wound in his stomach. The blood was gushing out in great crimson jets. The nurse bandaged the wound with quick, expert fingers, and then leaped to his feet and started back toward the rear, saying, "This is serious. The bullet is inside his belly. I'm going to get a surgeon. Don't give him any water."

Tanimura seemed to recover from shock and began to moan, "It's heavy, it's heavy, it's heavy in my stomach." With that he began to claw inside his shirt and drew forth a packet, saying, "Here is a letter and my picture. Please see that they get to my home." Then he cried, twice, "Emperor, Banzai!" and he grew silent, but his eyes were rolling wildly. All of a sudden, his voice became surprisingly calm and natural. "Please ask the company

commander to come here," he said, quietly. In an instant, the officer was kneeling beside him, with one of Tanimura's hands in his own.

"I'm very sorry," Tanimura whispered, weakly.

The commander gripped his hand and shook it. "It's not serious. Don't worry."

The dying man smiled faintly, "Good luck to every one. And keep on fighting." With these words, he made a terrible effort to raise himself, but he could not. The officer's face was working with grief and there were tears in his eyes.

Presently, stretcher-bearers arrived. They lifted Tanimura from the ground and started toward the rear at a rapid pace. Bullets bit at the ground all around them. About an hour later, they returned. They said Tanimura died in the ambulance.

As the day drew to a close, the Chinese fire grew so heavy that we dared not raise our heads above the lip of the embankment. Once, one of our airplanes bombed them. We have been expecting air raids from them, but, strangely enough, there have been none. Towards dusk, their raking fire slackened a little.

Meanwhile, I saw a group of prisoners, about fifteen, carrying their guns upside down. One of our officers was leading them. Someone said that

Sublieutenant Maruyama's squad had taken a pill-box, and these men were their prisoners. One Japanese was killed in the attack. The prisoners were slim and delicate-looking. I was struck by their appearance of extreme youth.

Darkness finally came and still the engineers had been unable to repair the bridge. A Chinese pill-box, just across the river, commanded the point completely and we heard that we were losing a good many men there. Unable to advance, we settled down for the night.

But hardly had the night draped its dark mantle over the countryside and the thin half-moon begun to shine, than orders came for us to move. We retired to a village in the rear, joining another company. All the houses were already filled with men from another unit, but we managed to pack ourselves under the eaves between the houses. We found piles of dry straw, some with the rice ears still clinging to them, and these made wonderful beds. We stretched ourselves on the soft straw and pulled more of it on top of us. "What could be better?" someone murmured. There were sighs of deep contentment all around me as the men stretched out in this comfortable billet.

Of course, it was too good to be true. Hardly

three minutes elapsed before we were ordered out again. What luck! We paid for our three minutes of luxury by the accentuated chill of the night.

Then began a slow, cautious movement. The moon was dim, but still it lit the countryside enough to expose us to enemy eyes. So we marched while a cloud lay across its face and halted, pressing flat against the ground, when the light grew brighter again. We were not sure of our position, but it was obvious that we were going up toward the front and that we were in open ground, fully exposed to the Chinese fire. It was not long before they spotted us and let go with their rifles and machine guns. Directly ahead of us, through the shadowy woods, their guns chattered. We could see the innumerable red dots, sparkling angrily.

The assignment was to occupy a captured pill-box, in which a unit commander was stationed. It was the one that Maruyama's squad had taken during the day. Because of our go-stop, go-stop approach, in the alternating shadow and light, the advance was very slow. At last, we crossed a small stone bridge and arrived at our objective. The pill-box was round, a moundlike protuberance that stood out prominently in this scene. A trench had been dug in front of it. We settled there. This, not the downy rice straw, was our abode for the night.

I looked out across the landscape. It seemed supremely lonely. There was now no evidence of the instant death that waited out there. The moon bathed it all in a soft gray light. Behind us was the creek. To the left, the road was a silver stream that faded into the half-light in the near distance. I scheduled our turns at sentry duty and sank back into the trench. It was cold and unfriendly there. My eyes closed.

The next thing I knew, someone was shaking my shoulder. It was Tonari, who had been on duty. "There's something out there," he whispered, "creeping toward us."

I jumped up and peered into the gray. He pointed down the road and at first I could see nothing.

"Those shadows," he said. "There, that blackness. I am pointing right at it."

I saw the blackness and then I saw it move. As I watched, the blur of darkness split into several parts. "Chinese scouts," I said. "Let them get a little closer. Wake the others."

Even as I spoke, the deathly silence was ripped to shreds by an explosion of machine-gun fire. Bullets spattered all around us. Instinctively, we all ducked. We could not tell from whence the shots had come. Almost immediately, the firing ceased.

I cautiously poked my head over the top of the trench and looked again toward the road. Now, to my intense surprise, it was completely deserted, a mere white line running out into the darkness. I blinked, rubbed my eyes, and looked more closely. There was nothing to be seen. The black shadows had disappeared into thin air. An eerie, uneasy sensation swept over me. The other men were looking, too, but none saw anything. Was it men, or ghosts, that we had seen? We doubted our own senses.

Then a faint sound, something like a flute, came to us out of the unknown. It had a queer, plaintive sound. Presently, it grew louder and a mournful cry mingled with it. A chill ran up my back and I felt the hair on my neck grow stiff. The weird music was coming from the road, from the very spot where the shadows had been. I called out,

“Shirahashi!”

“Yes, sir,” he said.

“Wait your chance, and then get down there and find out what that is. We’ll cover you. Be careful and stay low. Don’t go any farther than is necessary.”

“Yes, sir.”

A moment later, the scrap of a cloud blotted the moon, and he hoisted himself over the top of the

trench and crept down toward the road. We leveled our rifles, concentrating on the spot he was approaching. We saw him draw very near, then turn. An instant later, he was back in the trench.

"Some natives are dying down there," he said.

Then, it all seemed very simple. Some Chinese refugees, caught in the swirl of fighting, had been trying to make their way between the lines to safety beyond. The Chinese had spotted them and probably mistaken them for Japanese. They were hit by their own people.

"There's a man, there," said Shirahashi. "He's dead. Right near him is a woman, wounded. She must have been holding a baby. Anyway, a baby is lying in the road. Listen. You can hear it crying."

That was the faint, flutelike sound we had heard. The woman was moaning.

The baby cried almost all night. Sometimes its little voice grew loud and shrill, cutting the dark, silent air like a knife. Then it would die away and then begin anew.

It affected us very badly. Each succeeding wail was like a saw, drawn across our taut nerves. Even the insects seemed to join, to create a symphony pathétique. The men murmured and finally began firing their revolvers into the air, to drown the

sound. The mournful cry, incessantly repeated, gradually drove us all to the breaking point. At last, I was unable to endure it any more.

With a sudden jerk, I hoisted myself out of the trench and began wriggling across the ground toward the road. I was hardly conscious of the danger. The baby's cry was my guide. In a few moments, I was on the road. I thought my heart would burst when I saw what was there.

Beside the bodies were the pitiful things they had tried to bring with them. A basketful of cooking utensils littered the road. Near by, was a bundle of quilt, held together with a cord.

The dying woman was some distance away. Her arms were outstretched, trying to reach the baby, that lay on the other side of the road. She was saying something soft and comforting. Her body moved, with painful heaviness, as she tried to reach it. A feeling that I cannot describe clutched at the bottom of my heart. I was only a few yards from this little tragedy.

And then, suddenly, the Chinese opened fire again. Their machine guns pumped bullets toward us and the milky night air was filled with their ugly whining. I dropped flat on the road. Whether they saw me, or were simply spraying the ground, with-

out any specific target, I could not tell. Anyway, I crept hurriedly back to the trench.

There were several more bursts of fire. It seemed to me that one or perhaps several more bullets hit the poor woman. The baby cried even louder. I could not shut out the sound. Like a powerful magnet, I felt it pulling me down toward the road again. I put my hands on top of the trench, preparing to go over.

"It's too dangerous," someone said. "There's nothing we can do for them."

I heard the words, but they meant nothing to me. Almost before I knew it, I was in the open ground again, writhing like a snake toward the road. I reached the road and went beyond the spot where I had stopped before. The dying woman seemed not to notice my approach. She herself had moved. With some superhuman effort, she had hunched her broken body across to where the child lay. She was still alive, patting it with fluttering hands, caressing it, and weakly murmuring some little lullaby.

I picked up the quilts and rolled them around the baby's soft, warm body. Then I thrust the child into her bosom and covered her with another quilt. By that time, I suppose, she was dead. She grew silent.

I slunk back to the trench, but even in the silence

I seemed to hear the baby's cry and it was nearly dawn before I fell asleep. So it was with all the men.

November 12, 1937.

That long sad night finally came to an end. In the eastern sky, there came a ruddy flush and then the sun rose, a great, blood-red ball. As is our custom, we meditated a moment toward the sun.

With the light, the Chinese began a scattering fire again, which gradually gained in pace. Nevertheless, we were more concerned with our breakfast —or, the relative lack of it. We had sweet potatoes again. Even the section commander joined our potato hunt, behind the pillbox.

Then, marching orders. We were told to advance along the road of tragedy, on our left. The Chinese were no longer covering it. As we passed it, I again saw the woman. She lay in a lifelike position and seemed still to be caressing the child I had placed at her breast. It was still alive. I thought I saw it smile and coo. I hastily averted my eyes.

We entered high grass and used it to camouflage our helmets and knapsacks. It might have been a dangerous advance, except for the fact that scouts had been through the terrain ahead of us. We saw numbers of vacant pillboxes. About a mile ahead,

we reached a small village, surrounded by bamboo. We stopped there, briefly, but barely had time to munch a few mouthfuls of food when we were ordered forward again.

Eventually, we came within sight of an isolated white house. It was still about 600 yards from us when the company commander, Kataoka, told us that was our immediate objective. The protective grass clumps ended near by and there was a long stretch of open land between. About 100 yards from the grass was a small mound. We waited an instant and then charged, and were instantly met by a withering fire from the Chinese machine gunners. I dropped flat on my face and heard the bullets singing overhead. The others did, too. The next instant, I was on my feet and running again. It took no time at all to cross that 100 yards. I fell, panting and thirsty, at the base of the mound. The others all made it safely.

For a moment, we were pleased with ourselves, warm with the double glow that comes from having attained a goal, however small, and from having escaped danger. But it lasted only a moment. Behind us, a voice shouted, "Fall back." I turned and saw that the officer was speaking to us.

"Why? What's happened?"

"The artillery is going to open up on the Chinese

positions just ahead. You're in a dangerous place if any shells fall short." We could see, not far in the rear, the big muzzle of the gun being wheeled into place in a bamboo grove.

The section leader made a quick decision. "We'll go forward, instead of back," he said. "Occupy the house. First Section, forward!" He leaped to his feet. His naked sword was gleaming in the air as he brandished it above his head. Once again, we were in the open, with bullets flying all around us. Again, under a particularly heavy burst of fire, I dropped to the ground and buried my head in the unharvested rice stalks. They made it difficult to run, catching at our feet. The fearful pumping of the guns sounded above me. I wondered, uneasily, about the men in my squad, but it was too late to do anything.

I raised my head a little and saw that some of the section had reached the house. They were deploying around the sides and rushing into shelter, one after another. I set myself to start again and, as I leaped to my feet, one of our machine gunners, stretched out just ahead of me, suddenly released the triggers and rolled over. I saw his face, staring vacantly up toward the sky, as I sprinted past him. In a few seconds, I was beside the house.

Behind the house, on the side opposite the Chi-

nese position, a trench had been dug. Numbers of our men were crowded into it. Others were on either side of the house, operating machine guns. The din was terrific. The Chinese were answering our fire, apparently concentrating three or four guns on this house. Bullets were striking the walls and ricochetting into the air with a high-pitched twang. Little puffs of earth and sand sprang into being all around us. The tiles of the roof were cracking, splitting, and falling to the ground. An old camphor tree beside the trench was fully exposed and it was literally disintegrating before our eyes. It was a curious sight. The bullets kept striking branches and leaves, and there, apparently for no visible reason, the old tree was falling to pieces.

I noticed, with great relief, that all the men in my squad had made the hazardous crossing safely. But the number of our casualties, in that short open space, was very great.

In front of the house, there was a creek, spanned by an arching stone bridge. A pillbox was just on the other side, so placed as to command the approaches to the bridge and a wide area on either side of the river. The pillbox's open slots looked like big goggle eyes.

At that moment, the roar of our own artillery sounded. It seemed to roll across the ground with

leaden-heavy feet. A shell screamed over our heads and exploded beyond the creek. One of our planes appeared overhead and joined in the bombardment. The Chinese cleverly held their fire, entirely, while the plane was overhead. I guessed that they were afraid the explosions of their guns would reveal, to the Japanese pilot, the exact location of the pill-boxes. A heavy bomb from the air probably would destroy them. Otherwise, the pillboxes, covered with grass and molded in gentle curves into the landscape, would be almost entirely invisible from the air. But as soon as the planes left, they opened fire more ferociously than ever. Under the terrible cross fire, it would have been suicide to attempt an advance.

But as evening came, the clouds gathered and soon a fine drizzle was falling. "Now we go," someone said. "The next stop is that pillbox, on the other side of the bridge." The Nakamura section was told to take the lead. Everyone began stripping off his knapsack, in order to run faster. Our artillery, in the rear, was laying down a heavy barrage.

"Forward!" the Nakamura section leader cried and the men were out of the trench like a pack of hunting dogs. Fortunately, a shell landed directly on the approach to the bridge, on the Chinese side, at that same instant. A fountain of white smoke

rose in the air. The shell knocked out a Chinese machine gun and provided a screen for the attackers.

“Well done!” a captain cried, excitedly.

“Now it’s our turn,” shouted the section leader, Yamazaki. “Once you start, don’t stop. Cross that bridge as fast as possible. It’s your only chance.” We fixed bayonets. The eyes of the men were fixed and glinting with a strange sort of madness.

The next thing I remember was jumping from the trench and starting toward the bridge. It was like a dream, in which, no matter how your muscles strain, you seem to make no progress. I ran as hard as I could, but it seemed an age before I reached the end of the bridge. I could hear the men behind me. We made it and fell behind the protecting curve.

On my stomach, I edged forward toward the top of the dome. Bullets were whipping the stones angrily and little sparks glittered all around. Only a few feet in front of my head were the corpses of two Chinese soldiers, half-burned. They probably were killed in the explosion of that shell, just at the moment of our charge.

Our orders were to deploy on either side of the bridge, once we reached the other side of the creek. We thus would protect the flanks of the Nakamura unit, that had charged straight for the pillbox. Bul-

lets were coming like hail, and so I made no attempt to go further. I yelled, "Be careful," to the men. Then, as quickly as I could, I jumped to my feet, vaulted over the side of the bridge, and landed with a great splash in the creek. I was then at an angle where the Chinese fire could not reach me. While I watched, the men came over the side, one by one, in the same way. Half of us spread out on one side of the bridge and half on the other. We immediately cut a shallow trench in the soft earth. The pillbox was silent, apparently taken.

It was now dark. The trench was wet and the ground all around us was damp. The light rain continued to fall. Besides, after being keyed up so tightly, a nervous reaction had set in. We were all shivering and our teeth chattered, incessantly. I went under the bridge to inspect the rest of the squad. To my intense relief, all of the men were safe. No one had suffered as much as a scratch. Sakagami, whom I told to take charge of the men on his side, seemed depressed.

"When I was crossing the bridge," he said, "I was frightened by a sudden flash of bullets. So I lay flat, gripping a dark object lying in front of me. Then I saw what it was. Did you see it? It was a Chinese's body, burnt to a crisp. Half his face was blown away. I've been washing my hands over and

over again, ever since, but I can't throw off the feeling that it's a bad omen." He added, absently, "Another one is up there, still alive and moaning." His face twisted as though he had something bitter in his mouth.

Had we not been so busy, that night, we might have been more uncomfortable than we were. The Chinese fire never slackened. They shot thousands and thousands of rounds at us, making up in tenacity what they seemed to lack in courage. Of course, we were not permitted to build a fire to warm ourselves. And as for food, the only bite I had was a morsel of dried fish. Then I remembered the omen-vest, made of dried cuttlefish, that I have told you about. I wished I had it with me. Even that might have tasted sweet. Suddenly, all thoughts of hunger were driven away.

"Counterattack!" someone cried. Peering through the darkness, I saw a black mass moving toward us. I pointed and shouted, "Open fire!" Yoshida, the machine gunner, swung the nose of his weapon around and pressed the triggers. A spatter of bullets leaped into life. The men were blazing away rapidly with their rifles. I called over to Sakagami.

"Can you see the enemy?"

"Yes. We're giving them all we've got."

Just as I turned my head, the machine gun sput-

tered, coughed, and stopped. A thrill of horror ran through me. Yoshida cursed.

"What's the matter with it?" I asked.

"I don't know."

He dug inside his coat and quickly brought out a flashlight and began tampering with the gun. I was badly frightened. Rifles alone would not stop that weighty mass, rolling toward us like a comber in the ocean. We felt helpless. Fortunately, he fixed the gun quickly.

"Cartridge belt is damp," he said. I sent a man to get a dry one. No music has ever sounded sweeter to my ears than the ugly pumping of that gun when it resumed fire. Suddenly, we could see nothing more. The attack was beaten off.

The Chinese attacked six times during the night. More than once, they came so close that we could hear them, but we never came to grips with them. They would come almost to point-blank range. We waited, with bayonets fixed, to meet them, hand-to-hand. At that point, they would unleash a terrific rifle fire and then run.

November 13, 1937.

In the cold dawn we left our trench and started moving cautiously through the rice fields. It was a

wet, gray morning. The whole area was a mass of pillboxes, so the bullets came from all directions. A maze of communication trenches had been dug here to connect with the different forts, but they had been abandoned as we advanced. We never once came into close quarters with the Chinese. These entrenchments would have given them an enormous advantage over us, but they made little or no use of them. On both sides of me, I could see the brown masses of our men. Here and there, they were attacking pillboxes. We stopped, finally, in one of the many trenches. I could see only two of my men, from where I lay. Someone was shouting. The words came to me.

"Where is the second squad leader?"

"Here," I answered.

"One of your men has been hit."

Before I could learn more, someone said it was not one of my men. I heard voices calling for a nurse. The bullets poured on us like rain.

Next, we were ordered to proceed to a village on our right. We moved up the trench, frequently crawling along its sides and into the open ground to avoid the Chinese corpses that littered it. We did not like to step on them or touch them. We were in muddy water, up to our knees.

Only a few houses were still standing in the vil-

lage when we entered it. The section leader was there. His face was serious. "I've got a bad job for you," he said and pointed toward a pillbox in the open field, just beyond where we were standing. It seemed like some menacing, formidable monster crouched there waiting and watching us with wide, unblinking eyes. The round, grass-covered head and the parallel gun slots made me think, somehow, of a huge octopus. I ran my eyes over the ground between it and the place where we stood. It offered little protection, except for a mound, some distance ahead, and within easy range of the pillbox. If we could reach that, we might be able to machine-gun the monster and disable its crews. I suspected that the reinforced concrete head would be impervious to hand grenades. So, directing the men's attention to the mound, I ordered a rapid advance. The Chinese saw us coming and filled the air with bullets, but the range was too great and none of them took effect. Panting and breathless, we at last flung ourselves behind the protection of the raised ground. Now, at this range, the Chinese fire was extraordinarily accurate. Bullets spattered all around us, snapping the edges of the mound and kicking up little spurts of dust. The Chinese machine gunners sprayed it, like water from a hose. Then the fire slackened and I cautiously raised my head. Instantly,

there was another burst of fire and I felt something like a sharp slap on the right side of my head. I put my hand to my ear and it came away red. Blood began running down my neck. Then my ear began to burn. A bullet had just grazed it.

"It's no use trying to get at them from the front," observed Sakagami, lying beside me. "They can knock us over before we have a chance."

"We might try the back," I said. "Unless they've got gun slots in the back of the pillbox, or unless some other pillbox protects them, they're defenceless from that direction."

"More chance that way," he agreed.

I told the men we would retire to the village and cautioned them to crawl along the ground, taking advantage of the mound as far as possible. "Then run," I said. "Go, one by one."

They needed no such warning. Presently, we were all back in the village. We entered a bamboo grove, in order to conceal ourselves from the enemy and began our encircling movement. Eventually, we came within sight of a peasant's hut, directly at the rear of the pillbox. This, obviously, was a vulnerable point for the pillbox. I could see that there were no gun slots commanding this angle. Therefore, it seemed a matter of common sense to suppose that the Chinese would try to defend the house and, in

fact, all the rear approaches to the fort. We fixed bayonets for close fighting, advanced slowly, and then, en masse, raced toward the house. To our surprise, not a shot was fired at us and not a single Chinese bayonet opposed our attack. We broke into the hut, walked through it, and found ourselves right behind the pillbox. It was silent as a tomb. For a moment, I thought it had been deserted.

The pillbox was about thirty feet in diameter, with two heavy doors of unpainted wood. As though it were no different than a private house, we knocked on one of the doors. There was no answer. Then a fusillade of bullets came across the field, from the Japanese side, and I realized we were under fire from our own men. I hastily planted a flag on a piece of bamboo and stuck it in the top of the pillbox. The firing ceased.

While I was doing this, I saw three holes, apparently for ventilation in the big box.

"I'm sure they're in," said Kojo, one of the privates.

"We'll see," I said. "Give me a hand grenade."

He took one from his pack. I pulled the pin and dropped it down the ventilation pipe. Then another and a third. In an instant, we heard the explosions, dull and muffled. Then, I ordered the men to train their rifles on a certain spot in one of the doors.

They fired, but it might have been made of steel, for all the damage that was done. One of the men hurled a big rock at it, without result. Then I hammered with the butt of my rifle and cried, "Ni lai lai, ni lai lai." ("Come out, come out!") There was no answer. I kicked the door violently and repeated, "Ni lai lai, ni lai lai." Utter silence was the only answer.

I was scratching my head, wondering what to do next, when suddenly I thought I heard a voice inside. I put my head close to the door and it became more audible. Someone was speaking, calling something to us in Chinese. The door trembled. I sprang back, pointing my rifle toward it. It opened, just an inch or two, and I caught a glimpse of a dirty, powder-streaked face. It was the first time I had seen an enemy at such close range.

Then, they opened the door completely and stood there, with their arms, pistols and rifles, held out in token of surrender. We collected more than thirty of these weapons. I was surprised at the amount of these, as well as the number of rounds of ammunition they had.

Again I repeated, "Ni lai lai," and gestured to them to come out. They began to emerge, hands held high in the air.

The first thing that struck me was their youthful

appearance. They looked like delicate, slim, young boys. And then their close resemblance to us Japanese became apparent to me. I had a twinge of sadness and bewilderment when I noticed this. They were almost like our own people, yet we regarded them as the enemy.

They bore the marks of the hand grenades. One had some bad burns. Another's cheek was a bloody mass, torn to ribbons. Still another had had part of his jaw blown away. They came out bowing and rubbing their hands, and making gestures that seemed to plead for their lives. One broke through us and darted away into the field, like an antelope. We shot him down, as he ran.

There were quite a number of them, how many I do not remember. I realized that there were more inside. It occurred to me that the prisoners outnumbered the captors and that those inside must still be armed. So I sent one of the men back to the section commander, asking for assistance. He came up quickly, with some more men.

I then entered the pillbox, myself, with one of the men. The acrid tang of gunpowder filled the air. It was very dark, except for the light entering through the gun slots and the ventilation pipes. I lowered my bayonet and cried, "Ni lai lai, k'uai k'uai ti la." ("Come out quickly.") Some others

moved and I stumbled over two corpses near the door. Someone was groaning. Two were weeping aloud.

These two constituted the most unusual part of this strange experience. They were both mere boys, like the others slim and attractive. They might have been mistaken for girls. They turned toward me and began talking rapidly, through their tears, saying something that of course I could not understand. I shook my head to let them know this, and there was a fresh burst of words and wailing. Then, one took out of his pocket a notebook and flipped the pages until he came to a small picture, pasted there. It was of an elderly woman. I realized that they were brothers and that the picture was their mother's. Why they were weeping I do not know, except for fear that having been captured, they would now be executed. A sharp pain seemed to touch my heart and I would have liked to free them on the spot, but there was nothing I could do. I tried to show them by gestures and a smile that they would not be harmed. Their tears stopped and a faint shadow of joy crossed their faces. I felt angry and disgusted, yet helpless in this episode. All I could do was hand over these boys, with the other prisoners, to our party and watch them march away.

I re-entered the pillbox, empty now but for the

dead men on the floor, and looked around. The walls seemed about three feet thick. Beside the entrance were the words, "The Twenty-Fifth Year of the Chinese Republic." Strangely enough, a number of umbrellas were hanging from the ceiling. A large quantity of food, cooked rice, beans, and hard biscuits had been stored. We fell on the biscuits like famished wolves and fairly gulped them down. Then someone said, "What if they are poisoned?" It was too late, then, to do anything about that. I, myself, had swallowed four. We picked up the ammunition and whatever books and papers we could find, and left.

An identification tag torn from a uniform, told us the name and regiment of a Chinese sublieutenant. I remember him well, because of his startling resemblance to a Japanese friend of mine. On the lining of this cloth were the words, "Be Loyal to Your Duty," "Observe the Regulations," "Action Instead of Argument," "Toward the Fulfillment of the Revolution."

Back in the village, when we returned, I saw numerous Chinese captives. I now felt excited and happy. We had taken a pillbox and carried out a dangerous assignment. I washed my hands in the creek and examined my injured ear, then prepared

for the first real meal we had had in several days. We all talked and laughed and compared notes, in the manner of men who have faced and escaped great danger.

Later, we had to return to the white house where we had left our knapsacks. We retraced our painful steps of the day, even crossing the arched stone bridge, over which stray bullets from distant pill-boxes were still flying. It invariably gives me an uneasy feeling to turn my back on the enemy when bullets are in the air. The sensation of danger while retreating is much different than when you are advancing. However, at last, we all reached the house.

There, the company was in the midst of a funeral for those who had been killed during the day's fighting. There was no really suitable place, but a hole for the cremation of the bodies was cut in the mulberry field, near by. The fire was already burning, by the time I arrived. Along with the others, I knelt in the field and joined my hands in prayer. The same man who had intoned a Buddhist sutra during the service at the Temple of the Maiden prepared to conduct this ritual.

He stood erect, beside the pit from which clouds of smoke were billowing. For a moment, he meditated in silence and then, in a clear, strong voice,

he began to chant. The whine of Chinese bullets, still sporadically crossing this field, supplied a curious counterpoint for his music.

An officer murmured, "This is dangerous. Lie down as you pray."

"I will be safe," the priest-soldier replied calmly.

He continued to chant. Bullets whipped the mulberry trees on all sides of him. I watched him with admiration. This man frequently describes himself as a bad priest, sinful and corrupt, and careless of the rigid vows he has taken. But at this moment, he seemed to me noble, even sublime, as he stood there like a tree, straight and firmly rooted, oblivious to danger, serene in his faith. For all that he showed, this open field, alive with bullets, might as well have been the dim and silent recesses of a temple.

We advanced no further this day. A great number of pillboxes had been occupied, at the sacrifice of a great many Japanese lives. Yet, many others remained. How many more would we have to take before this region was entirely under control? I decided not to think about it.

We moved toward the rear, entering a village where, for the first time in many nights, we knew the sharp, almost painful pleasure of sheltered rest on soft straw.

November 14, 1937.

Today we were shifted into the reserve. We moved behind the lines, beyond the theater of fighting, and lolled all day in a warm trench, safe from even a stray bullet. The clear autumn sun gently bathed us. We wanted nothing but rest and this we had.

But it was all too brief; for with the nightfall, we again moved up into the line. A beautiful moon was shining. The orders were to make a surprise assault on a certain point where the Chinese were concentrated. We expected to have a good bit of charging, and perhaps hand-to-hand fighting, so we stripped our packs down to a very few essentials.

When I learned of this, a thrill of strain and yet expectancy ran through me. I thought about the men in my squad. It seemed to me that we had been unduly lucky, having gone through day after day of the hottest kind of work, with hardly a scratch. Two of the original thirteen had fallen behind, one with a slight wound, the other from illness. I had had part of my ear shot away. But this, considering what we had gone through since the day of the landing, was nothing at all. Sooner or later, I felt, our luck must run out. The laws of averages will begin to operate against us. I tried now to pre-

pare myself, mentally, for disaster. Some of us, I thought, will surely be sacrificed.

We had a little time left, so I called the men together and proposed a quick feast of rice gruel. To me, it was a sort of farewell dinner, but of course I said nothing about this. They agreed readily. We prepared the gruel in our tin boxes and ate it together. My heart was full of excitement and foreboding, and I kept my eyes moving from one face to the other, as we ate.

We had hardly finished before I was summoned to staff headquarters. The company commander was standing on a small bank, beneath a tree. All the section and squad leaders were there. From where we stood, we could look across a wide expanse of ground. It was like a lake in the deceptive light of the moon, a lake with a steep, black shore. That was a forest, in which a pillbox was concealed. We were ordered to take it. We examined the terrain and got our instructions. Then the company commander ordered the artillery to open up.

The gun crashed. Almost instantly, in the black depths of the wood, we saw the shell explode; a flash of fire and smoke. The sound rolled across to where we stood. "Good shot," said the commander. Four or five shells were dropped on the same spot. Meanwhile, the infantry was moving into line, preparing

to cross the silvery field. But the Chinese seemed to anticipate us, for suddenly a sublieutenant cried, "Enemy coming up! It's an attack." There was a rattle and rumble, all down the line, as the men clamped their bayonets on the guns and then swung them around toward the advancing Chinese.

It was hard just to lie there and watch. Some primal instinct, running hotly through us all, impelled us to rise from the ground and plunge forward. Discipline is stronger than instinct. We had no orders, so not a shot was fired and not a man moved out of line. We saw wave upon wave of Chinese infantry coming across toward us. At that distance, they were hardly more than a mass of disembodied shadows, black against the silver of the field.

Then, as it happened so many times before, the shadows melted into nothingness before our very eyes. Suddenly, the field was empty again and drenched in silence. Nothing was there. It required an effort of mind to realize that, a moment before, lines of enemy had been coming toward us. The effect was weird, illusory.

We waited. Presently, they let go with machine guns from both their right and left flanks. The guns pumped and chattered for several moments. We could see the little red dots in the distance and the

bullets sang through the still night air, like thin steel wires, vibrating. Lying flat on the ground, as we were, they caused us no damage. We continued to lie there. Time passed and still there was no order to advance. Many of the men went to sleep. In this way, the night deepened and finally passed. It was anticlimactic, but not unusual in this strange war.

November 15, 1937.

What we admire more than anything else in the Chinese is their ability to retreat. This is said sincerely and not in sarcasm. One moment they are confronting us, apparently hot and raging and coming toward us for a death grip. And then, even as we watch, they vanish, fading from view like images on a motion-picture screen. Quickly and quietly, and with consummate cleverness, they go away.

Thus it was in the morning. They surprised us completely by withdrawing, during the night, on soundless feet. The only human sounds in the air, this bright sunshiny morning, were those we made. Last night, the half-light was filled with bullets. Just across the way, a considerable force of the enemy was stationed. Once they moved out toward us. Their machine guns spit viciously. Their pillboxes were manned and prepared for us.

But today—nothing. Not a bullet, not a movement, not a sound. We marched across toward the clump of trees. Nothing opposed us. The pillboxes were silent as tombs, deserted, empty. The only Chinese we saw were the Chinese dead, sleeping quietly where they had fallen. It surprises us, also, that the Chinese should abandon their dead, in this manner.

Not only the soldiers but the peasants as well, were gone. We were in a lonely and silent world.

We found ourselves crossing a long stretch of flat and, for the most part, monotonous ground. Then we came upon an ocean of flowers, wild daisies, cosmos, and some white blooms very much like the sorrels we have at home. I have told you before that we frequently camouflage ourselves as well as possible, sticking bunches of grass or twigs into the netting that covers our helmet for that purpose. Now, under the pretext of thus protecting themselves, the men began picking flowers as they marched.

It is rather amusing. For, strange to say, they “camouflaged” their helmets by adorning them with the white daisies, which would make a target that an enemy sharpshooter could spot from a mile away. Some of the men, in fact, literally covered themselves with these lovely blossoms, winding them into

every possible spot on their uniforms where the flowers would stay. They looked like chrysanthemum dolls, such as we see in the autumn flower shows at home. The fact was, of course, that the soldiers, as always, fell in love with the flowers and therefore picked them. Then too, I suppose, the color of white is naturally attractive to those of us who see so much of blood, mud, and dirt. The purity and nobility of a white petal touches our hearts, in these days of battle.

At noon, we halted beside the road and the usual canvass of our dietetic prospects began. Incidentally, it was rare that we could dine, as we did this day, without hearing bullets. At any rate, someone produced a sack of beans.

But, as always, it was Hayase who saved the day. He has a peculiar talent for finding food. His stomach, I believe, has eyes, and it leads him unerringly, like a magnet to metal, or a divining rod to water. Whenever we stop in a village, his first concern is to rummage and poke around, hunting a kitchen, and, finding it, to take stock of its contents. He has a dry, unsmiling manner. But his eyes, mischievous and twinkling, betray him.

Now, as we prepared to dine on beans, he suddenly appeared with a goat slung over his shoulder.

Our eyes popped with surprise and we burst into a cheer.

"Poor animal," said Hayase, sadly. "It got itself killed—killed by a single shot, too."

We roasted the goat and parched the beans. Someone produced a silk cloth, embroidered with red. We spread it on the ground and placed the tin mess dishes on it, filled with goat meat and beans.

"What a beautiful day! Just like a picnic."

Afterward, I went down to the creek to get a drink. In the water's clear mirror, I saw my face, dirty and covered with a stubbly beard. It looked changed, the face of a stranger. I took out a razor and, with only the cold water, fought a painful battle with my beard.

"Look at our commander," one of the men said, "dolling up for our entry into the city of Kiashan."

We marched onward and, in the afternoon, the crenelated towers on the walls of Kiashan suddenly emerged from the horizon. Our flag, the red Rising Sun, floated proudly from the highest point above the gate. My heart contracted with pride when I saw it and the tears came into my eyes. We did not enter the city, but bivouacked in a small village, on the right.

Dinner, that night, was a banquet. The city was

well-stocked with food and my men went on a buying orgy. There were plenty of chickens in the village itself. From the city, we bought pickled plums, eggs, cakes, candy, and a vast amount of Chinese wine. The food was placed before us and we lolled on the warm earth, eating and drinking almost to suffocation. Gone now were the memories of hunger and cold, wetness, danger, and death. The pleasure of sheer animal living was almost unbearable.

Sublieutenant Yamazaki, the section leader, joined us and we asked him to sing "Konya, the Harlot." He agreed, but was called away before our banquet was finished.

As I sat there, watching the firelight playing across the bronzed faces of the men, my mind went back over the events of the days since we landed. The memories of some were confused, often fragmentary, perhaps misleading. Under such great stress, one's observational powers are not entirely accurate. Still, the general impression was there and a sort of surprise came over me in the realization that, although thousands of bullets and shells had come near me, I was still alive, virtually untouched. Many others had been less fortunate. The men were greatly changed, their very personalities different. They had become so strong, robust, both mentally and physically, that they were nearly unrecognizable.

I remembered, too, how I had wrestled, on the boat, with the curious fact of being a squad commander, with practically life and death powers over thirteen men I had never seen before. As I told you, I doubted at the time that I could assume such responsibility. You recall how heavily it weighed on my heart. And I reflected, now, how absurdly easy it has been. Through action and not mere mental reflection, I had found the answer, solving the problem by exposing myself to every danger that they had, going first in approaching the abyss of death.

Danger and hardship have bound us together in an iron-strong relationship on the field. We trust each other implicitly and we have merged our individual interests in the common whole. It seemed to me, as I thought of it, that we had found simplicity and humility to be closely akin to nobleness. We had been welded solidly, in the fighting, into a group sworn to fight, through everything, for the fatherland. It gives us strength and makes us able to die in the field, almost unconsciously saluting the Emperor with our last breath. The hardships that had seemed so great at the time, almost unbearable, were now quickly forgotten. Indeed, they now appeared, in my mind's eye, to be bathed with a pure and radiant light.

Before we advance again, I am going to mail this

long series of letters to you. My dear brother, this does not mean the end of the war. There are endless muddy roads and ghastly battles still ahead of us. Believing in our spiritual strength, I will go ahead as bravely as possible. Believe me and pray that I may be able to write again soon, beginning with my usual phrase, "I am still alive, Brother."

Good-by, now.

WHEAT AND SOLDIERS



## INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1938, Chinese and Japanese armies fought a tremendous battle on the yellow plains of China's Middle West. The prize was the city of Suchow, strategic key to a railway connecting the seacoast with the interior. This railway was like a great, sprawling fortress, lying flush across the path of the Japanese advance. Without it, they could go no further.

Both sides knew this. Each began massing its full strength for the impending struggle. From every direction men and munitions and all the modern engines of destruction, came pouring toward a focal point.

Before the positional lines were drawn, scores of engagements, ranging from skirmishes to major battles took place. The Chinese frequently isolated and trapped Japanese columns as they entered the region, on their way to a junction with the main forces.

This was the fate of the unit to which Corporal Ashihei Hino, an intelligence officer, was attached. He records the full story of a disaster on the road to Suchow. To Japanese readers, who had been fed

with official army communiques and censor-filtered newspaper reports, it is a great classic. It is the voice of the common soldier, crying out in fear and pain and horror, as death approached.

For purposes of condensation, this translation omits the book's report of the long and uneventful journey from Shanghai to the Suchow area.

Baroness Shidzué Ishimoto

By the time I reached headquarters, Kawakubo, chief of staff, had almost finished giving instructions to the officers gathered there. They all looked very grim and serious. Kawakubo summarized the main points of the coming operation and then he said, "That brings us almost to Suchow. I understand we already have flanked the Chinese front and that the enemy is withdrawing. There seems to be a good deal of confusion. It will be a matter of great regret if all the fish in the net slip away. I don't believe that will happen. Thousands of enemy operatives remain in that area. The job placed before us is to try and destroy them completely."

That was all. We saluted and left.

There was still some time before our departure, so I took Umemoto, the photographer, and went for a walk through the town. Very few inhabitants remained. They were helping the soldiers draw water and load provisions. The walls surrounding the city and the gates were in good condition, and pierced everywhere with rows and rows of gun slots. Patriotic posters had been plastered by the Chinese on both sides of the wall, "Let us have money from the rich to protect the Fatherland," "Consolidate

a firm position," "Uncover dishonesty and fraudulence," they said. Nowhere did we find any anti-Japanese slogans.

This town seemed to have been a great liquor-producing center before the war. Numerous homes and stores bore signs denoting types of liquor. I could not help but admire the Chinese calligraphy. Their characters are greatly superior to mine.

Aimlessly, I wandered through the streets and finally came to the outer wall. I climbed to the top of the gate and saw again the immense fields, stretching away on every side. A road lined with willows split them. It was choked with our men, long, long columns of them, marching toward the front.

Thousands more were awaiting the order to march. They had stacked their guns and were stretched out beneath the eaves of the houses, shading their faces from the sun. Every soldier had a Senninbari circling his waist. The stitches were stained and faded with sweat. From the men's shoulders, small bags containing various good luck charms were hanging.

The men were suffering horribly from the heat. Some put handkerchiefs or small towels beneath their caps to protect their heads from the sun. Many had opened their uniforms and were fanning

their bodies with painted Chinese fans. The towels and handkerchiefs had been soiled with dust and then soaked with perspiration. They smelled evilly, but the men did not dare throw them away, because they could get no others.

Their faces had been burned black with the sun. They had let their beards grow and the hair was matted with yellow dust. The men had not been able to wash their faces, let alone having a complete bath, for several months. They lay like logs beneath the shady eaves, thinking only of resting until the last possible moment.

Most of them had slipped off their shoes in an effort to relieve their feet which were swollen and covered with old and new blisters. After every long march, some of the men were so badly incapacitated they could hardly go further. Their feet were treated with iodine, but the next day new blisters came up and were broken open by the continual marching. The pain was often almost unendurable. Sometimes, their toenails were smashed and fell out.

I know this feeling. Sometimes, it is as though these were not one's own feet. The torture becomes so great that we almost pray for the appearance of the enemy to distract our minds from the suffering. But somehow we stagger on. I am often surprised at human capacities; how much further we go and

how much more we can do than would be believed possible.

However, at this moment the men were enjoying a bit of blessed relief. It was luxury simply to lie down. Some of them were bathing their sore feet in wine jugs filled with alcohol. It was a temporary comfort. When the moment to march came, they slipped back into their shoes and stood erect. Many tottered and shambled awkwardly, like wounded men, for the first two or three steps. Afterward, they grew steady.

At one o'clock, that afternoon, my detachment left. In the distance and from all directions, we could hear the muffled thunder of heavy gunfire.

We marched again through the wheat fields. It seemed impossible to escape them. Passing a small town, I saw a pile of corpses, the bodies of Chinese soldiers in a trench beside the road. Death had not been long with them, for their bloody wounds were not yet dry. Among them, here and there, were some still living. I saw arms and legs move slightly, gently disturbing the quiet dead.

Suddenly, I realized that I was looking at this awful sight, without any feeling whatsoever. I was surprised. Had I ceased to be human? Had I been captured by devils? Many times I wished to kill the enemy soldiers. How often had I directed my

guns at them? Therefore, it would be sentimentalism, now, to feel sorrow at the sight of death which I, myself, had tried to bring to other Chinese soldiers. So I reasoned. But I could not deny a feeling of chilly dread as we marched past the trench.

In the town, a few natives were gathered in small groups. Women were giving naked babies the breast and there were a few very old men. They seemed dazed and anxious. Indeed, it was a pitiful sight. Some soldiers were giving biscuits to the children, and cigarettes to the women and old men. At first, they would not take them. Suspicion showed plainly in their faces. A soldier jokingly pretended to threaten one of the women with his gun when she would not accept his tobacco. Then she took it, lit it, and smiled for the first time. The others quickly followed suit.

We came to a temple, on the outskirts of the village, and there the village headman gave us hot tea. He was a nice-looking old man, leisurely smoking a long pipe. We talked with him through an interpreter. When someone asked him why he entertained us in this manner, he laughed loudly and replied, "It's not because you're Japanese. We do the same thing when the Chinese armies stop here." The soldiers laughed and someone asked what he would do if both armies came at the same time.

"Run away," he retorted.

As we approached Suchow, I noticed that many of these farmers fought against us in co-operation with their regular soldiers. But I saw that their assistance was not, in any way, as sincere as their interest in the soil. They serve tea to soldiers. But they do not do it because they like the troops, either the Japanese or their own.

Then I went to see the prisoners our infantry had taken. There were about 1,500 of them.

Umemoto told me that very often Chinese stragglers mingle with Japanese marching columns after a battle, without either knowing it. Dust, mud and blood have obscured the distinguishing marks of their uniforms, and friend and foe alike are too tired to talk. So they just march along in silence. Sometimes, the Chinese hear the Japanese language and of course they do not understand it. But since there are so many different dialects in China, most of which are spoken only by people of a particular district, the Chinese merely conclude that the Japanese words are those of some Chinese language they do not understand.

Discovery usually comes after a rest period. The men all lie down together, but when the order to march is given, the Chinese, of course, do not

understand it and continue sleeping. Then they are made prisoners.

From the rear of the group of captives in this village, I saw three being led away to execution. One was about forty, the other two were very young, less than twenty, I thought. A soldier told me these three had refused to answer questions, tried to fight with the examining officer, and then sought to escape.

I turned my eyes away from them, unable to watch them die. It occurred to me that at least I was not a complete captive of the devil. I was glad of that.

We saw many Japanese flags, for the villagers use our symbol like a safety charm. The refugees at the temple had made a Rising Sun flag, a queer one, with a square sun set against a dirty brown background. Other homemade flags had been pasted on the eaves of their houses. Carts were decorated with the Rising Sun and some of the villagers even pasted it on their backs, like a haori coat. Clever ones picked up tin cans, thrown away by the troops on march, and walked around holding the sun insignia outward whenever other Japanese troops approached. To them, it was a talisman. We all laughed. Some of us were homesick at the sight

of so many Japanese flags. It made us long for the day of our return, when our own people would wave these symbols for us.

Again we marched for hours through the endless dusty fields and finally came to the village of Sunkan. There, again we halted and I went to look around the town.

It seemed to have been a very rich city. I saw rows and rows of large and handsome homes. The customary red lucky papers were pasted above every door and the scrolls of gods of good fortune were everywhere on the walls. It was easy to see how assiduously the Chinese pursue prosperity for themselves or their families.

I wandered through the streets, but saw no one. The houses apparently were all deserted. Finally, I entered one of them. A blue-silk curtain hung over the door and a sweet scent clung to the room. It made my heart beat with a feeling I cannot describe. It was a small room and appeared to me to have been the bedchamber of some young couple. The furniture was elaborate. There was a fashionable, full-length mirror for dressing, some small feminine shoes embroidered in blue and red, some tiny lacquer boxes and pewter and silver toilet articles, a silver lamp, and a red table.

In the rear of the room was a double bed, three

sides of which were inlaid with mirrors. Fine silk and satin quilts covered it. On the table were some elegant thin "pillow books", showing men and women in erotic positions. The whole room was heavy with a kind of warm, feminine fragrance, a living thing so different from the dusty smell of the battlefields that it overpowered me. I stretched myself on the bed and closed my eyes. My rough, dirty shoes despoiled the silken quilts. Suddenly, I was swept away by a voluptuous surge of feeling that I had entirely forgotten since I came to the war. I sprang from the bed and looked at myself in the mirror. What I saw was a grotesque, bearded mask. I had come into this house a conqueror. I left hurriedly, a defeated man.

When I returned to staff headquarters, Major Takahashi and Lieutenant Colonel Nakayama, the staff officers, laughed at me, saying, "Where have you been? We thought you were lost." They were dining early, because the main party was expected to resume march at two thirty the next morning. Nishi, the chauffeur, had bought a lot of eggs in the morning at Chu-hsi-kow, so we had boiled eggs and onions for our dinner. A soldier named Saito helped me strip the onions and, as we worked, he told me about himself.

His parents were old, and both he and his elder

brother were among the first to be called by the army. They prayed that their sons both might have luck and safety. But his brother was killed at Shanghai. He said he did not fear death, himself. But his voice lowered when he talked about his people at home. I tried to encourage him. "Yes, we are ready," I said. "Our lives have been dedicated to the country. Yet there is no harm in protecting ourselves as much as possible." Suddenly, it seemed deathly quiet where we were. A faint breeze rustled like a ghost through the branches of the willows and our small candle flickered, throwing eerie shadows in our faces. Above us was the serene silver moon. There was not a cloud in the sky.

The main force resumed march at two thirty in the morning. Originally, we had intended to accompany them, traveling in automobiles. But although the moon was still drenching the plain with light, we were told it would be dangerous to drive over rough Chinese roads in semidarkness, so we decided to wait until dawn and then overtake the marching columns. My first thought was to pass the rest of the night in some Chinese house inside the city wall. However, I was afraid of oversleeping and thus delaying the start, so instead I went outside to one of the cars. Trucks and ambulances and touring cars were parked together beneath a clump of wil-

lows just outside the walls. Some mule drivers had tethered their animals near by. Umemoto and I each took one seat in a touring car. He lay down in back and I got in the front seat with Nishi, the driver. The peaceful Chinese moonlight streamed in through the windows of the car. It seemed very quiet and remote after the main force had gone.

Some of the men stayed inside the city walls. Some never saw the dawn of the next day.

I dreamed I was riding along a road lined with pine trees, the branches of which were twisted together. The Chinese had set their guns in the branches and were subjecting us to a hot fire. It did not seem to hurt us much, but turn and twist as we would, there was no escape. Even in the dream, I was greatly puzzled.

And then suddenly I awakened. As I passed from sleep to consciousness, the crackle of rifles and machine guns continued. The shooting was real!

Dazed and still befuddled by sleep, I jumped from the car. I gave Nishi my steel helmet, mentally reflecting that we would be helpless if our driver were killed. I drew my pistol and sword, and stood uncertainly staring at the city walls.

I did not know the time. The moon was a faded silver disk, sunk to the level of the crenelated towers on the wall. Soldiers were flitting back and forth

like shadows. From the top of the walls and the towers little red dots sparkled as they poured bullets toward us. I pressed myself against the corner of a truck and watched as the men set up a machine gun. Bullets spattered wickedly all around us. One made a hole in the steel near where I was standing. The angry clang as they struck other cars and trucks sounded on all sides of us.

It was a surprise attack, delivered from inside the city, after our main party had left. When the town was taken, many of the Chinese simply hid their rifles, burned their uniforms and became civilians again. Some probably hid inside the hundreds of houses, some in the mountain outside of the city. Then, after our main party left, they suddenly attacked. Our men who were sleeping inside the walls must have been killed first. Then the gates were closed and barred, and the Chinese trained their rifles and machine guns on those of us outside.

Suddenly a soldier standing near me fell heavily to the ground. His body lay exposed. "Get up," one of the men yelled. "You'll be killed." But he did not move. I dragged him back to shelter and shook him, but there was no response. His helmet had two bullet holes in it, and blood smeared my hands and uniform.

I called for a nurse. The soldier's face was pale in

the dim light and I thought he was dead, but suddenly he opened his eyes and murmured faintly, "It's my head."

"You're all right," I said. "Your wound is not serious."

The nurse quickly wrapped a bandage around his head. Then three of us carried him to an isolated house, a short distance in the rear. About twenty men were there. Bullets sang their vicious song around us, raising little smoky clouds of dust at our feet.

Then I rushed back to the car where Nishi was waiting and told him to drive the machines into the shelter.

He signaled the other drivers, and presently the rumble of motors blended with the crackling of rifles and the pumping sound of the machine guns. Several of the cars however had been damaged by bullets and refused to start. They were abandoned.

I returned to the shelter of the house. Lying under the truck, the man who had been hit in the head suddenly raised himself on his elbows, cried "May our Emperor live a thousand years!" and fell back. But he was not dead. Two or three others who had been hit in the face and hands were getting treatment from the army nurse.

Dawn had not yet broken and it was still almost

dark. Only a few of our party were regular infantry-men. The others were engineers, chauffeurs and special-service men. They stood up well under the unceasing rain of bullets and occasionally returned the fire. But we could see no enemy.

There was no thought in our minds of retreating, we were concerned only with retaking the city. The shelter in which I stood was something like a temple, strongly built of bricks and mortar. Some of the bricks had been knocked down, and we constructed a breastwork of them and mounted machine guns behind. We were about fifty yards from the wall.

The machine gunner took careful aim at the gun slots in one of the towers, where there was a Chinese machine gun. He pressed the trigger. The rattle of our fire sounded sweet to me. In the dim light, we could see our bullets striking in and around the gun slots, chipping off the edges of the bricks and raising little white puffs of dust.

Meanwhile, two squads of regular infantry had deployed on both sides of the temple. Another group had pressed themselves against the base of the wall at an angle below the Chinese fire. They could not be hit, nor could they run to where we were.

I noticed an under officer strolling from one end of our line to the other, apparently no more concerned than if he had been inspecting a barracks. It seemed to me a case of unnecessary bravado and I was annoyed with him instead of feeling admiration for his courage.

At the same moment, I heard someone shouting that there were Japanese soldiers trapped inside the city walls. What had been their fate? What would mine have been, if, as I first planned, I too had stayed inside the city?

In an open space, not far away, a number of donkeys were tied. They were screaming with terror because of the noise and the bullets that sang around them like bees. I saw a large white one stagger. A bullet had hit him in the hip. Bright red blood gushed out and the animal half fell. His hind legs seemed to tangle with each other and he slumped to a sitting position. Another donkey bent his head toward the stricken beast and muzzled him as though they were whispering together. One by one, all of them were hit. Ghastly wounds were torn in their flesh and the spot where they were tethered was damp with their blood. It made us sick to stand by watching, helpless to rescue them.

Several army trucks and automobiles were with-

drawing from the scene of fighting, proceeding in a cavalcade toward the mountains. The Domei<sup>5</sup> car began to burn. Great black clouds of smoke poured from beneath the hood. Sudo and Takasaki, the two Domei reporters, jumped from behind the shelter and made a daring attempt to extinguish the fire, but could not. Then they tried to save their equipment, but the enemy rifle fire was so severe they finally had to race back to cover.

Morning finally came. In the gathering light, I saw the green "Asahi" (a Tokyo newspaper) motorbus standing near by, so filled with bullet holes it looked like a big hornet's nest. An army truck and touring car were similarly riddled.

In the open space on two sides of the wall, the two small groups of Japanese infantry were still dug into their holes, watching the wall and occasionally firing a shot at the Chinese, who were invisible. Without artillery, we could do nothing. Infantry alone was powerless against the heavy bastions and stout gates of the city. The enemy fire never slackened.

Suddenly, at about seven o'clock, a Japanese soldier, barefooted and clad only in a shirt, darted from beneath the cluster of disabled trucks nearest the wall. He was armed only with a bayonet. In-

<sup>5</sup> Semiofficial Japanese news agency.

stantly, an elderly officer, sword in hand, followed him. Together, they made a dash across the open space and reached the shelter of the brick house, unhurt. The officer cried out to us:

“What are you waiting for? Don’t you know there are still some of our men inside the city? Some have already been caught and killed. Come on! We’ve got to save them.”

In the broken fragments of his excited speech, we learned what had happened.

The men who stayed inside the city were, like us, wakened by the sudden sound of rifles. Thinking the city was attacked from the outside, they rushed into the open, unclothed and armed only with their rifles. Some were killed the moment they emerged from the houses. The others, quickly grasping the situation, took cover, separately and in little groups. They watched as the Chinese closed and barricaded the gates, piling great mounds of logs and stones against them.

They realized that they were trapped, and could only wait and hope that those Japanese on the outside would be able to fight a way back into the city and rescue them. I could well imagine the alternating waves of hope and despair that must have swept them as they heard our fire from the outside, finally realizing that, without heavy guns, the gates

could never be forced. So they waited. In the darkness of the night, they had a reasonable chance of remaining hidden. But as the hours passed and dawn began to break, their situation grew desperate.

They decided to make a break for it. Creeping from their hiding places, they suddenly sprinted toward the walls. Instantly, they were surrounded by Chinese. The officer and this one man had succeeded in cutting their way through, after a short, sharp melee. They saw another Japanese killed by a bayonet. Cutting, stabbing, and clubbing like fiends, the Japanese tried to reach the wall. Others joined them. The officer and the one private alone escaped.

We had expected reinforcements to arrive long before this, but none of our columns was in sight. So the officers decided to send for help. A young corporal and a driver climbed into one of the trucks, and started off through the fields. We thought the Teragaki unit was following us and this man was ordered to find it. We watched the truck until it disappeared in the shadows of Mt. Chen-chiang.

Suddenly, in the distance, there came the dull boom of a heavy cannon. Instantly, we all pricked up our ears and looked in the direction from which the sound came. Our first thought was that a battle had begun near by, probably between our follow-

ing columns and some enemy force. If this was so, relief was near at hand. Only a few seconds later, the real truth came home to us.

A heavy shell exploded with a terrific crash, raising a fountain of yellow dust, in the wheat field, hardly two hundred yards away from us. It was an enemy gun. We were entirely surrounded, trapped between the Chinese who held the city in front of us and those who apparently were coming up from the direction of the mountains. Surprise gave way to despair on the faces of our men. Our position now was hopeless.

More shells fell. They came closer and closer, like the thunderous footsteps of an invisible giant, marching toward us through the field. The brick house was in plain sight. Getting its range was a simple matter for the Chinese gunners in the distance. Finally, a shell exploded with terrible violence squarely beside the house. The ground shook, fragments of bricks flew in every direction and, for a moment, the whole scene was obscured by smoke and dust.

Then we heard cries. Someone yelled, "The battalion adjutant is hurt." Several men ran from the building and took cover in the field. Later, I discovered that four soldiers inside were wounded by that shell.

I remember thinking coldly and without emotion, "This is a tight spot." Since the landing at Shanghai, I had often been in danger, but I was never really afraid when it was a matter only of rifles and revolvers, and hand-to-hand fighting. Furthermore, it had been our experience that the Chinese would probably not attack from inside the city. They do not like to expose their bodies in open combat. So we had felt reasonably secure as long as the brick house stood between us and the bullets that came from the walls.

But big shells were different. The house was in plain sight. It was a matter of time until it would be completely leveled. Instead of being a shelter, it was becoming a death trap. Nobody said a word. The men, singly and in small groups, ran outside and began digging holes in the ground.

Another shell burst near the Domei car and set it afire again. A strange thing happened. It might have been funny at another time, but now it seemed horribly portentous to us. Apparently the insulation burned off the electric wires attached to the horn and, as the car burned, the klaxon screamed in a husky, wailing voice that gradually grew weaker. It seemed as though it were alive, screaming woefully in the agony of death. The Domei men watched in distress. Inside the car was their portable wireless,

and much valuable film and photographic equipment. Not until the car had become a blackened skeleton did the klaxon's cries stop. It heightened the feeling of helplessness that gripped us all.

An hour passed. The house was hit several times. The Chinese fire from the city continued. Then we saw an airplane overhead, with our own Rising Sun emblem painted on its wings. For a moment we were delirious with joy. We fired our rifles, spread a small flag, and waved our hands. But it passed serenely overhead, apparently without taking any notice of us. That was the moment of extreme bitterness and despair. There was our help above us, a link to connect us with the rest of the army, a sure means of communication. But it did not see us.

Then we heard the sound of heavy firing around the north side of the city walls, opposite our own position. At first we took little notice of it. Finally, it occurred to us that this might mean the appearance from that direction of a new Japanese force and that the Chinese inside the city had it under fire as it approached.

Hardly had the thought occurred to me than I heard a shout: "Tanks! It's our own tanks coming up." We all turned our heads toward the fields and there, sure enough, were five Japanese tanks, com-

ing toward us in single file. They were the small, high-speed kind. As they approached the walls, they executed a right turn, so that the forward guns of each one were pointed toward the city. Then, on signal, they fired simultaneously. It made a tremendous racket and chips from the bricks flew in all directions. But the tanks were armed only with machine guns, so the actual effect was very small.

Then I heard a deeper, different tone. The Chinese on the ramparts were replying with hand grenades. There was a short, brisk engagement.

Finally, one of the tanks pulled out of line and rumbled over toward our shelters. A sergeant major, smudged with oil and sweat and dust, emerged from the hatch. Our battalion adjutant, his right arm and shoulder heavily bandaged, rose to meet him. The tank commander was a big man, with a gentle face and large black eyes. He lit a cigarette and said that his unit had met the truck we sent out, in the morning. In response to the corporal's message, the tanks had come up as fast as possible.

The adjutant briefly explained our situation to him. "Our best chance is to breach the gates and fight a way back into the city," he said. "There is some enemy artillery back there in the hills, prob-

ably with considerable infantry. We are exposed to shellfire and it will be serious if their infantry attacks from all sides. Besides, we have a number of wounded. We must get them to shelter. If you can smash that gate, I believe we can retake the city."

The tank commander asked specific information about the ground around the gates and the weight of the barricades behind them. He said the eye splits were too narrow to permit a good view while the tank was in action. That officer who had escaped in the morning was called and he described the manner in which the Chinese had blocked the gates. "We can try," said the sergeant major. With that, he climbed back inside the great machine.

The motors rumbled and its nose jerked around toward the gate. It waddled like a fat frog over the uneven ground, heading for the walls. Immediately, a rain of hand grenades poured from the walls, exploding against its top and sides and all around it. A great cloud of yellow dust arose, obscuring our view for some time. Finally, we saw it emerge from the clouds and roll back toward us.

The officer reported he had twice rammed the gate and had succeeded in forcing a narrow opening, barely two feet across. It was hopeless to send the men through that aperture, since they could

have entered only one at a time, to be shot down immediately. He said the tank was too small and light to drive any further.

In reply, the adjutant begged him to make a second assault and he agreed. As he disappeared, a soldier, wild with excitement, rushed up and shouted, "Eight of us have formed a death band. Give us as many grenades as we can carry and we will go with the tank."

Again the machine moved toward the gates, with the eight men following. Again the Chinese poured grenades on it. We could see nothing, as the clouds of dust and smoke rose. We waited, breathless with hope and excitement. Then, to our great despair, the tank finally came back. The officer shook his head and said it could not force the gate. "I can't even attack again until some repairs have been made," he said. "Their hand grenades have damaged us."

We could not see any of the eight men who volunteered for the death band.

Meanwhile, the enemy artillery fire had begun again. A shell dropped squarely on the roof, sent the tiles flying, and exploded on the inside. There were many killed and wounded. Another fell in the yard. We could hear the shells coming. It sounded like the ripping of a great silk sash.

The shells were sufficiently heavy to destroy a tank if they hit one, so the five machines withdrew some distance into the fields.

In midafternoon, another Japanese airplane roared at a low altitude over our heads and dropped a message tube. We seized it frantically, thinking it would tell us that help was coming. Instead, it ordered us to move to a position, some four miles northeast of the city. It informed us that the Chinese had encircled one of our artillery units and that relief was needed. What a situation! Here we were, ourselves in dire need, commissioned to go to the assistance of another force. Of course, there was nothing we could do. It was dangerous to stay where we were, but impossible to think of moving out from cover, either abandoning our many wounded or trying to carry them with us.

Unconsciously, I again went inside the house, now battered and broken, with holes in the walls and through the roof. There were several rows of wounded men lying there, stretched out flat, or propped against the walls. One of the Domei men was bleeding from a bad cut in the face. Most of the men were bleeding from not one but several wounds. I stepped outside and walked on. An instant later, a shell exploded almost on the spot where I had been standing. Then another fell not

far to the right. The air was alive with shell fragments and I was washed completely with the clouds of thick, choking dust. How I escaped I cannot tell. Others, some already wounded, were snuffed out instantly. Still others received new wounds. I heard voices, but no cries. We lived without speaking through this nightmare.

I went back to the pit. The special-service men had taken rifles and arms from the bodies of our dead, and covered their heads with metal helmets. A young soldier came to me and told me that if I would give the order, they would follow me in an attack on the city. It was better than squatting there in the pits, helpless under the Chinese fire. I told them the adjutant was in command and, since he had given no order, there was nothing we could do.

The day passed. Lengthening shadows crept across the mountains as the sun sank. Nothing had changed. If the Chinese had had the courage, they might have emerged from the city and perhaps wiped us out in a frontal assault. They must have been superior in numbers. But they did nothing. They do not like to expose themselves in the open.

Then the enemy artillery opened up even more furiously and the shells came like a storm.

I had thought of myself as being utterly brave and daring, but now I was quaking inside and my

convictions were shaken. I had been perfectly confident that the enemy's bullets would never find me. Suddenly, at this moment, I realized that that was merely mental comfort. Great shells were erupting all around us. With every explosion, some of our men were blotted out. It was mere chance that these shells had not found me, chance alone had saved me thus far from death.

I was filled with anger at the sight of life being destroyed so carelessly. So much noble effort goes into the development of a single human life. Every man has his future. Every man here was someone's son. Many were husbands and fathers. Every one was a valuable member of my country. They had, folded away in their hearts, the longing for home and were merely waiting for the day of the return. But one chance shell ends forever the possibility of that return. This is not unusual. It is the feeling everyone has in the midst of war. It does not mean that we refused to die for the country. But I could not prevent this indignation against war, in its entirety, from welling up in my heart.

We crouched low in the shell holes and the shallow pits we had dug. I felt an overwhelming desire to jump out and attack, but there was no use. The hours passed. "I don't want to die in this place," I thought. I didn't consider myself a coward. I be-

lieved I had been brave, but I had an intense desire, then, to survive, to escape death, to go on living.

The men in the pit with me were still digging, burrowing deeper into the ground to enlarge the shelter. The earth was loose sand, so I too dug, but with my hands. A soldier offered me his shovel. I took it and unconsciously began tracing the characters for "Father" and "Mother" in the soft sand.

Then I erased them and wrote the names of my wife and children. I closed my eyes and prayed to heaven, "Help me." I touched the good-luck omen my mother had given me. And I thought of their prayers for my safety.

At the same time, the thought came to me that all around me were men whose families in Japan prayed for their safety. Yet, they were dying, one after another.

The soldier touched me on the shoulder. "If you don't dig," he said, "you will be killed." But it seemed, at that moment, that I would be killed anyway and my hands were nerveless, refusing to act. Then I could stand it no longer, and foolishly jumped from the hole and ran toward the house.

A shell crashed so close to me that for a moment I lost consciousness. Dust and sand filled my eyes and nose and mouth. My heart began to race and, for a moment, I could not hear. All hope was lost,

it seemed to me, and yet I murmured, "I don't want to die. Can nothing help me?" I put my hand on my heart, as though to stop the pounding and told myself that this was not fear. That was an apology. For that's what it was. Fear.

I made a mighty effort to control myself. Many wounded were lying around. Others, who were not hurt, simply lay prone, staring, their eyes rolling wildly. When someone said something, even though it was meaningless, everyone else listened intently, as though the words were very important. We all knew that only the early arrival of relief could save us from being killed, one by one, under the rain of shells.

Takasaki, the reporter, sat gripping his knees, an expression of despair on his face. "We must be prepared to die," he said. He forced a twisted smile. I tried to smile, too, but the muscles of my face would not obey me. It occurred to me that, rather than die ignominiously, it would be better for me to take my own life. I pulled the pistol from its holster and pressed it against my temple. A cold, uncomfortable sensation shot through me. I had pictured myself as dying gloriously, on some battle field, crying with my last breath, "Long live the Emperor."

But now all I wanted was to live. The terrible de-

sire for life so filled my heart with emotion that I almost burst into tears. I closed my eyes and prayed. I tried to shut out the incessant thunder of shells and the cries of the wounded. In an effort to control myself, I tried to go to sleep. Perhaps I did doze off for a few moments, but it was not long before I awakened and then I could sleep no more.

I had not eaten one bite of food for nearly twenty-four hours, but there was no feeling of hunger at all. I realized with something of a shock that my uniform was all bloody. I remembered having carried a wounded man, only a little while before, but it seemed a long, long time ago.

On the floor, a young boy lay sleeping, his head covered by a soldier's steel helmet. I envied him and, at the same time, admired the courage that permitted him to sleep in the very teeth of this great danger. But suddenly a shell exploded near by and he jumped up, threw himself into my arms, shuddering and crying.

The bombardment grew worse. By this time, the house was virtually a shambles. Suddenly, in the midst of the noise, a corporal climbed to the top of a pile of debris, waved his sword in the direction of the city walls and cried out, "Come with me. Let's not die without any resistance. We'll smash the gate with hand grenades. Come on!" I saw several

men jump to their feet and follow him into the hell of smoke and dust and bullets that filled the open space between us and the walls. Machine guns and rifles barked furiously and then the men disappeared.

At the same moment, a soldier, covered with dust and sweat, and almost completely breathless, came running into the shelter. He was a messenger. He told us that the men we had sent out in the morning had established contact with another unit of our forces and that it was hurrying to our assistance. But the cheer that rose from us died to a gasp when he added, "They are hurrying as fast as possible, but they cannot possibly get here before tomorrow morning."

It was cold comfort, almost tantalizing. For we did not believe we would live to see the next day. With every shell, more of us were killed or wounded. At any moment, the Chinese might emerge from the city and attack. The relief, when it arrived, would find nothing but a pile of corpses.

I was still unscratched, but many others were hurt. To occupy my mind, I circulated among the men, trying to help the wounded. It was dark by this time and, except for the lurid flashes of light that sprang up when a shell burst, we could hardly see. Groping around in the dark, I felt a body fall

heavily against mine. A voice said, "I've been hit . . . here . . . in the arm." I carried him into one of the pits. Having no bandages, I unwrapped his dusty puttees and then felt with my hands for his wound. My fingers touched bare flesh, where his shirt had been torn away, and then something soft and jelly-like came under my hand. His arm was mangled. At the same time, I touched the bare bone. It was broken and sticking through the flesh. I hastily bound the wound, saying, "It's not serious." The shock must have paralyzed him, for he said he felt nothing.

Another man had shrapnel in his back and neck. While I was trying to assist him, the first soldier began to complain of the pain in his arm. Sensation was returning. "My arm is smashed," he moaned. "I can't stand the pain. Give me medicine. Give me something. Let me faint." I heard him scrabbling about in the dirt, writhing, and trying to stand erect.

Each time he moved, another injured man, lying next to him moaned, "Be quiet. Aren't you a man? We've all got wounds." I went for the nurse and asked him to help, but he shook his head. "I have no bandages, no more medicine, nothing. There is nothing I can do for them." I went back to the pit. The man with the broken arm was growing de-

lirious. I put my arms around his waist and tried to hold him so tightly he could not move. Then he begged me for a cup of water. I found a canteen. A voice said roughly, "Don't give him any water, you damn' fool. He may have a hole in his belly and it will kill him, for sure."

Then it began to rain. We were chilled and shivering as the water collected in the bottom of the pit and rose around our ankles. Yet it seemed to quiet the men. I was glad for that and glad that it drove away the sickening smell of warm blood. At the same time, the enemy fire suddenly slackened. There were increasingly long intervals between the shells and the rifle fire from the city ceased altogether. The Chinese do not like to fight when it rains.

After the roaring of guns and crackle of rifle fire, the silence that now came seemed thick and heavy. We moved around silently and I was able to get some approximation of our losses. One machine-gun company alone had lost its commander and three subcommanders. Numerous officers were dead or wounded and the casualties among the men were horrifying.

Another messenger arrived. The relief was coming up, with an artillery unit in the vanguard. We were ordered to evacuate, under cover of darkness,

for the artillery was going to bombard the walls and city. The battle of Sunkan was to be fought all over again.

We were saved, yet it was impossible to feel any emotion over the fact. We were too tired. Our nerves were too badly shattered. The violence of our feelings, during the past hours, had exhausted us.

Silently, we began making preparations to move. Our first consideration, naturally, was for the wounded. Some could walk alone. Some surely would need support before they had gone far. Others could not walk at all. We made improvised stretchers for them. There were not enough and so those of us who were able carried the wounded on our backs.

We also carried away our dead.

The evacuation was done as quietly as possible, but the Chinese must have heard us, for they again opened fire from the walls. My teeth grated in anger at the thought of this battered company, this broken, bloody group of cripples, being again subjected to bullets. Resentment burned fiercely for an instant. All I could do was reflect that this was war.

The man on my back had a badly shattered leg. It dangled, like a piece of torn cloth, as I walked. The pain must have been horrible, but he bore it

in silence. His voice was calm and natural as we talked about the shortest way to reach the hills in back of us. He said he believed it would be better to cut diagonally across the wheat field, rather than follow the winding road. So I did that. After a while, he grew very heavy and his body would slip, slightly, down my back. Then I would stop and try, as gently as possible, to heave him up higher again. I heard his teeth grind together, each time, but he said nothing.

Then, outraged nature began to assert itself and I became acutely conscious of my empty stomach. I was weak with hunger, and my throat grew parched and dry. But we had no water. I had to stop frequently to rest, although I tried to halt as little as possible, for each such movement was a torture to the wounded man.

I thought I had walked miles, yet I saw no indication, in any direction, of our own party. I dared not so much as consider that we could have mistaken the way and were lost in these endless fields, alive with enemies. Perhaps the same thought was passing through the mind of my companion, but neither of us spoke of it.

At last, through the semidarkness, I saw a clump of trees on our right. I turned and plodded toward them, dimly thinking we might rest there. Under

the shelter, it might even be possible to wait until morning before going onward. As I approached the grove, there was a spurt of flame and a revolver fired, once, twice, three times. The bullets whined over our heads.

I virtually dropped the wounded man. There was no time to be gentle. We lay flat on our stomachs, peering through the murk over toward the spot from whence the shots had come. Our revolvers were in our hands. We lay there silently, straining to pierce the darkness, for a long, long time. Then we heard footsteps crashing through underbrush beyond the trees. Gradually, they grew fainter until they died away altogether.

After a time, we went on. We were now convinced we had taken the wrong direction and probably must have come very near to the position of that Chinese artillery force that had been bombarding us all that day. So I turned sharply to the left. Soon we heard sounds of men walking and the words that came floating toward us were Japanese. A great sensation of relief flooded through me. Presently, we were among them. There were about fifteen of them, mostly wounded, staggering and stumbling slowly through the fields. Finally, after an hour or more, we came to the main detachment.

Most of those who had been with me at Sunkan

had already arrived. Everywhere, men were lying like logs, drained of the last drops of emotional and physical strength. They slept as though dead.

I carried my injured friend to a dressing station and then, half-blind with fatigue, staggered away to find a place to sleep. Someone gave me a blanket, and I spread it on top of a big box and collapsed on it.

My eyes closed and the cool breeze caressed my cheeks. The storm was over. Patches of moonlight appeared between the scraps of broken clouds, scudding across the sky. It seemed to me I was too tired even to sleep. Then, beneath me, I heard a thin, high-pitched sound, almost like a flute. Curious, but too weary to turn my head, I merely put my hand in the box. It touched something soft, downy and warm. My fingers closed lightly around it and I drew it up to my face. It was a baby chicken, bright yellow and perky. At the sight, something seemed to break inside me and the tears poured down my cheeks.

I murmured, "I am still alive. Father, Mother, I thank you."

























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